UNIVERSAL LIBRARY
111 667
UNIVERSAL LIBRARY

THE NAVY HUNTS THE CGR 3070 is a magnificent modern saga of the sea that might well be called a 1944 version of Joseph Conrad's *Typhoon*. It is the true story of the Coast Guard Reserve Boat *3070*. Blasted for twenty-one days by hurricanes and blizzards sweeping along the Atlantic seaboard, *CGR 3070* became the object of one of the greatest searches in maritime history before she was finally located off the coast of North Carolina, after having traveled 3100 miles south of the position from which her strange odyssey began.

Before she became a Coast Guard Reserve Boat, *CGR 3070* was the ocean-going yacht *Zaida*, owned by George E. Ratsey, the famous sailmaker. *Zaida* is a beautiful, smooth-lined, 58-foot yawl whose style and sailing record are known in yachting circles all along the Atlantic seaboard. *Zaida* had never been designed for the work that was assigned her, but she took the job in her stride, and despite the pounding she underwent during the twenty-one days she went back to hunting submarines shortly after having been towed into port.

THE NAVY HUNTS THE CGR 3070 is one of the great stories of the United States Navy. It is also one of the first books to be released by the Navy that gives a detailed account of our war against the German submarines that menaced Allied shipping on our Atlantic seaboard during the gloomy year that followed Pearl Harbor. The *Zaida* was one of a number of private yachts, called picket boats or Hooligan's Navy, that had been turned over to the Navy which were manned by crews of experienced amateur yachtsmen. Theirs was an important job well done. Lieutenant Thompson has made the story of this boat a fascinating and exciting book.

This story was published in a condensed form in *Harper's Magazine* under the title "The Strange Cruise of the Yawl *Zaida*."

THE NAVY HUNTS THE CGR 3070

Lawrance Thompson
LIEUTENANT, USNR

DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & CO., INC.
Garden City, New York
1944

COPYRIGHT, 1943, 1944
BY LAWRANCE THOMPSON
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES
AT
THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS, GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

FIRST EDITION

Respectfully dedicated to

VICE-ADMIRAL ADOLPHUS ANDREWS, USN,
Commander Eastern Sea Frontier

TO THE READER

YOU MAY HAVE FOUND the bare outline of this story in your newspaper on Christmas Eve, 1942. Overshadowed by news of Allied victories in North Africa and the Pacific, such a trivial human-interest item would scarcely seem important. No enemy citadel had been taken, no flashing guns had scored another major sea triumph. The simple facts were these: nine enlisted men aboard a Coastal Picket sailing vessel had been blown far out to sea—and the elaborate search conducted by Army, Navy, and Coast Guard ships and planes had that day ended successfully.

Insignificant as the incident may have seemed, it was nevertheless interlocked with the gigantic enterprises of the United States in the second World War. That relationship I have tried to reveal by weaving the narrative of that strange cruise into the complicated pattern of anti-submarine warfare off our coast. True, the fortunes of the struggle would not have been altered if *Zaida's* winter cruise had never taken place. Nevertheless, one would have difficulty in finding any other single tale which reveals more clearly the diverse and complicated activities which thwarted the Axis submarine campaign and thus assured the vital flow of American supplies and troops from the United States to the beleaguered Allies throughout the world.

The symbolic nature of this narrative is cumulative. I have kept the dominant focus of interest on the missing yawl and on her crew, engulfed by the perils of the sea while carrying out routine assignments which were at times far removed from the crucial points of combat. Too often, we visualize war only in terms of those heroic fighting men who stand toe to toe against

the enemy, slugging it out to death or victory. But the familiar words, "In the service," encompass the duties of those who offer their lives to their country, and then find themselves assigned seemingly unimportant tasks, day after day and week after week, without opportunity to display any virtues except those of patience and loyalty. Such service is necessary and important; such patience and loyalty belong in the complete picture of war as surely as those virtues displayed by fighting men who return with medals—and fighting men who do not return. For that reason, there is another symbolism about the service of these nine men whose seemingly fruitless assignments were interrupted only by the hazards of a winter gale.

Before I undertook to tell this story, I wanted firsthand knowledge of Coastal Picket duty. Fortunately, I was permitted to sail on patrol aboard *CGR 3070,* after she had resumed her duties. I shipped as crew, took orders as crew, and stood watches with the crew—except for a few humiliating hours when I was excused because of seasickness. As a result of those experiences, I came ashore with a desire to tell this story in part, at least, from the oft-neglected viewpoint of the crew. To achieve the desired goal of actuality, I have told most of the story as it might have been related by one of the crew, interrupting his first-person narrative only where it is necessary to give some account of the background of the episode and of the complex and persevering search which was organized by the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier. This accent on the viewpoint of the crew may give a one-sided slant to the tale; if so, that is the slant I should like to give, as a kind of tribute to those enlisted men who constitute so large a percentage of the Navy and the Coast Guard, those enlisted men who have done such magnificent work in this war, during the tense moments of battle—and during the dull hours of waiting, waiting, waiting.

LAWRANCE THOMPSON

ILLUSTRATIONS

FACING PAGE

Zaida 38

Zaida's Cabin, Looking For'ard 110

CGR 3070 in Ocracoke Harbor 142

Crew of *CGR 3070* 146

1

LESS THAN A MONTH after Pearl Harbor, a German submarine cruised westward through treacherous Atlantic waters toward the coastal reaches of the United States. During the cold winter nights of early January, the undersea raider began skulking along shipping lanes, watching and waiting for her first target: an unsuspecting tanker that moved alone through darkness. There was a violent explosion as the torpedo slammed through plates amidships. Sheets of flame lit up the vessel from stem to stern. Then pandemonium. As the deck began to tilt, frightened men fell or jumped into the sea. Others fought the falls jammed in lifeboat davits, while tons of water surged through the hole at the waterline. Hours later, survivors told their story, and newspapers relayed it to an astonished nation. She had been the ten-thousand-ton Panamanian tanker *Norness,* sunk by a submarine, without warning, less than one hundred miles from the entrance to New York Harbor.

At dawn on January 19, six days later, the Canadian merchant ship *Lady Hawkins,* en route from the West Indies to Halifax, was ripped wide open by a torpedo. Unfortunately, she carried passengers. Two hundred and forty men and women were killed by the explosion or were drowned in heavy seas. Of the seventy-one who got clear and drifted in open boats for several days, five more died of shock and exposure.

Again and again the individual agonies of disaster were enacted off our shores during the days and weeks that followed. The experienced enemy was ruthless in his skill. Torpedoes were supplemented with explosive and incendiary shells that added carnage above and below deck. Crews were killed in their bunks

without knowing what hit them. Maimed firemen were caught under the wreckage of broken steampipes and scalded to death in engine rooms below the waterline. After the hit-and-run subs had gone, Navy vessels on patrol found the burning derelicts that remained. Smoke-shrouded hulls became forlorn islands of twisted metal settling lower and lower in the water.

Tankers were the favorite targets. Heavily loaded with precious shipments of airplane gas, they were frequently blown in half by the violence of explosions. Winter gales whipped fire along decks in curtains of flame that enveloped the men before they could abandon ship. Those who dove overboard swam through liquid infernos of fire. Some lifeboats, launched with full loads of frantic men, were swallowed up by roaring patches of flame that spread outward from the tanker. Days later, charred bodies drifted in with wreckage and scum that wrote mute epitaphs of violence along beaches from Jersey to Virginia, from the Carolinas to Florida.

The insult of such depredation stung the thoughts and feelings of American citizens, already sensitive from the recent Japanese infamy. Proud and cocky about American power, the United States had been carrying a chip on each shoulder—and suddenly both chips had been knocked off. The Japs withdrew from Pearl Harbor; but the German submarines pressed their advantage of surprise, day and night, week after week.

Those on shore who were most keenly shocked by the accumulated survivor-reports of disaster at sea were those most familiar with the sea and its natural violence. Warfare had added the trial by fire to the trial by water, and the Navy seemed powerless to protect the scores of ships and hundreds of lives which were being destroyed almost within sight of our shores. With increasing vehemence, American citizens along the coast voiced their indignation against the Government for not doing something to blast all the submarines out of American waters. Critical fault-finding quickly came to focus in the oft-repeated question: Where was our much-vaunted Navy?

The answer was neither simple nor comforting. The plain truth was that a two-ocean war had caught up with us before we had completed a two-ocean Navy, and yet with bold confidence we had made commitments that could not be fulfilled. In September 1940 England had greater need than we for the fifty destroyers transferred in exchange for base-rights. A few months later we had begun a program of Lend-Lease which obliged us to maintain a continuous flow of war supplies and foodstuffs to Britain. More than promises were needed to build a "bridge of ships" across the North Atlantic, and so it happened we were carrying the war to the Axis before the Axis had carried the war to us. While the American public blithely debated the virtues of isolation, the United States Navy went into action to make good the Lend-Lease promises voted into being by Congress. The steady increase of escorting destroyers in the North Atlantic had the intended effect. Gradually, German submarines along convoy routes between Canada and England were frustrated; the boastful threat to nullify American aid to the Allies had been given its first harsh answer. By the winter of 1941, increasingly large convoys plowed through to England with few losses. The first round of the U-boat campaign had been won by the Allies.

The Germans prepared for the second round. They knew that the Allies had succeeded in the North Atlantic largely because the United States had diverted so many fighting ships from her own coastal waters. They also knew that hundreds of Lend-Lease merchant vessels were shuttling daily along a thousand miles of peaceful and relatively unprotected ocean, from the Gulf of Maine to the Florida Strait. Reluctant to disturb American lethargy, Germany refrained from the obvious until after Pearl Harbor. Then the submarines shifted their concentration to coastal areas between New York and Charleston. Like a smart football coach the German U-boat specialist Admiral Doenitz threw his first-string team of submersible raiders against the exposed shipping lanes off our coast. His veteran crews settled

down to casual target practice, first off New York, then off Hatteras. Unarmed ships, little accustomed to the hazards of warfare, were easily sent to the bottom. Armed ships, proceeding blacked out with nervous caution in the dead of night, loomed obligingly against the shore glow and proved equally defenseless.

To give shipping all possible protection, the United States Navy sent out every coastal patrol vessel large enough to be of any value—and many not large enough. This pitifully inadequate fleet of small craft and Coast Guard vessels did the best possible; but the number of merchantmen needing protection was far greater than the number of fighting ships available. This desperate situation could be corrected only by building a larger fleet of patrol and escort ships.

American civilians had other ideas. They spoke their minds in bitter letters to the newspapers, in argumentative magazine articles, in stinging editorials aimed against Navy conservatism. Why not convert more peacetime vessels? What was the matter with the powerboats, large and small, that were always flashing in rich splendor along our coast each summer? Surely some of them were big enough for patrol. Why not build up a fleet from the larger trawlers that weathered all sorts of storm so familiar to fishermen? And certainly, some of the sturdy sailing vessels, pride of ocean-going yachtsmen, could be put to good use. Why wait for *new* ships to be built? Granted that these proposals were stopgap measures; circumstances *required* some kind of stopgap. And with the impulsive courage of minutemen in earlier days, blue-water sailors, fishermen, and yachtsmen pledged themselves and their ships to any use the Navy might find for them. Volunteers began to clamor for answers to their offers.

Wearily, the Navy tried to explain. The enemy was using a very powerful weapon which was no match for yachtsmen. This business of fighting submarines was no summer pastime for those who thought they were experts merely because they had raced to Bermuda. A large-sized submarine, over three hundred feet long,

could move at a surface speed of at least eighteen knots. Without any deadly torpedoes, such an enemy could fight a running battle on the surface with steady fire from her varied deck guns. It was all very well for impetuous civilians to talk about wanting to go out and lick the so-and-sos with bare hands and a boat hook, but such chatter didn't make sense. Besides, the Navy *had* been taking over and converting the most suitable of the privately owned vessels. The thousands that remained were too small or too slow. So there was nothing that the yacht club boys could do about the submarine menace—except join the Navy.

Indignation spread across the nation in waves of protest and explanation. The clamor from the blue-water civilians grew so loud that it demanded further attention in the nation's capital. Nobody was asking for even terms. Hundreds of the most experienced yachtsmen *had* joined the Navy; others had tried and had been rejected because of physical disabilities. These rejected men led the volunteers. Suppose the sub *was* a tough nut to crack; all these men asked was a chance to take a crack at one. Who cared if the odds favored Goliath? Arm the larger and faster fishing vessels and pleasure craft with machine guns and depth charges—and by God the volunteers would show the Navy whether anything could be done against a stronger opponent!

Furthermore, the volunteers contended, there was plenty to be done out there without fighting subs. Just the business of patrol would be important. Give them a chance and they would set up a long life line of rescue craft offshore for torpedoed merchant crews that might survive from a sinking ship but might never get to land in open boats through heavy weather. The English at Dunkirk had shown the importance of small craft in an hour of emergency. Here was a different kind of rescue work, but work important enough to justify some kind of immediate action.

The Navy reconsidered.

Through March, April, and May the submarine campaign steadily became more serious. Shipping losses off our coast

mounted until they were greater for given periods than the combined losses in all other sections of the Atlantic. Under these circumstances a line of small craft for observation and rescue would certainly be a valuable supplement to inadequate patrol forces, the Navy admitted. The Commander in Chief of the United States Fleet gave his orders to the Coast Guard (a branch of the Navy in wartime) to organize a force of observation and patrol vessels; to enlist from the civilian population enough competent sailors and navigators to man the vessels. Accept their sloops, yawls, schooners, ketches, and powerboats if they were over fifty feet long. Make them Coast Guard Reserve boats if they were lent for the duration. Organize the skippers and their crews, grant waivers for competent men with minor disabilities, put the men in uniforms as Temporary Reserves of the Coast Guard, then let them get out there and do what they could.

The response was so enthusiastic that the volunteers swamped the meager facilities first set up for enlistment. Before plans could be worked out in detail, Coast Guard Auxiliaries manned their boats, lined the docks at designated bases, and asked for their orders. They got them: the larger vessels were to proceed to specified areas for patrol, observation, and rescue. Without waiting for the business of uniforms to be completely standardized, many boats were sent out on temporary offshore patrol. And many of them returned with grateful survivors from torpedoed freighters and tankers.

Gradually the offshore activities of the Coast Guard Auxiliary were replaced by a more formal system of patrol by Coastal Picket boats, manned with officers and men in the Coast Guard Temporary Reserve. But during the early summer days of 1942, the enterprise was more picturesque than practical. Many of the skippers were old-timers, eager for the fray even if they couldn't pass rigid examinations. Many others were sail-crazy youngsters whose draft boards had turned them down because of such physical defects as weak eyes, bad knees, deafness, lameness. Before uniforms were issued (and after) they decked themselves in

miscellaneous garb suitable for heavy weather—mackinaws and sheepskins, Cape Cod oilskins and hip boots. They might look funny, but they knew their boats, and they knew how to navigate under all conditions. The Auxiliaries had originally signed up for duty by the day, by the week end, by the week, by the month. In any kind of weather they were eager to get out there and do what they could. If enthusiasm could have beaten the subs, the battle would have been finished in short order.

In retrospect, it is hard to believe that such a nondescript rabble was needed to help the United States Navy during the second World War. It seemed more like a throwback to Revolutionary days of privateers; to the days of Perry sailing against the enemy with absurd cockleshells and miscellaneous crews; of Elliott scraping together a gang of worthy tars that needed only a stiff tot of grog before taking on the devil himself. With that same gusto, the Coast Guard Auxiliary paved the way for the Coastal Pickets in the spring and summer of 1942. Their boats were as miscellaneous as their clothes. Clumsy old sea tubs patrolled offshore with luxurious yachts whose brightwork had not all been concealed by the standard Navy gray paint. Engine-driven Cape Cod fishing vessels kept company with racing yawls under jib and jigger. Disreputable spit-kits and mahogany-cabined cutters were all a part of the same fleet.

Many professional Navy and Coast Guard men were inclined to scoff. What kind of Navy was this, and what did they think they were up to, anyway? This bunch of hooligans wouldn't be any good to anyone; wouldn't be worth the powder to blow 'em to hell. Hooligan's Navy.

"All right," the Picket men answered, "have it your own way. Call us Hooligan's Navy if you want to."

They didn't ask for praise. They were bound together by the common impulse to do something about that part of the war that touched them most deeply because it was being fought on and under the element they knew best. While their own kind were being blown to pieces or drowned, these Picket men weren't will-

ing to sit by the fire and let them drown. Skeptics might look down their noses at such a nondescript outfit. But Hooligan's Navy knew there was a job to do—and Hooligan's Navy went grimly to sea.

2

MANY MONTHS before the first Coastal Picket boat went out on patrol, a group of earnest yachtsmen sat down with naval officers in the Headquarters, Eastern Sea Frontier, to discuss the tactical advantage of a "cruising" type auxiliary sailing vessel in anti-submarine patrol and observation. The most constructive arguments, based on years of practical blue-water experience, were presented by Alfred Stanford, Commodore of the Cruising Club of America. He pointed out that a good-sized vessel under sail gives no warning of her presence or approach to a submarine; that this advantage was shared by no other type of craft, either on water or in the air. Furthermore, a vessel hove to, with headsails backed and helm up, afforded a steadier type of observation platform than the deck of a destroyer or any other type of patrol craft. And a vessel hove to has less leeway or drift than a vessel under power. Thus, a sailing vessel could comfortably and effectively hold her station for hours and days without giving off any of the engine noises which might be picked up by the listening gear of an enemy submarine. Such vessels, available from private owners in considerable numbers, could keep the sea for at least a week or two of duty, because tankage space would be available for water rather than fuel, stowage space for provisions rather than for machinery.

Commodore Stanford further outlined a plan for sending out enough sailing vessels to serve as one continuous line of observation posts, linked by radio telephone to each other, to the shore, to aircraft, or to any larger patrols operating in given areas. Armed or unarmed, their greatest value would be to furnish constant and instantaneous reports of enemy movements and activi-

ties in those great stretches of coastal waters which were so extensive that Navy craft were at that time unable to patrol them with any degree of efficiency. If Commodore Stanford should be given permission by the Navy to organize an experimental fleet, he felt sure that he could enlist the services of excellent men who would have at least five years offshore experience, knowledge of celestial navigation, and ability to handle their assignments with courage and cunning.

In February 1942 the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier expressed his deep interest in Commodore Stanford's project and urged him to organize an experimental fleet. Within a short time members of the Cruising Club of America had been brought together to discuss the plan; to volunteer their ships and their services. Before the end of March more than thirty vessels, ranging from forty-five to ninety feet in over-all length, had been offered for the experimental patrol. Some of them had been promised as gifts outright, others were to be lent provided the Navy would pay the expenses incident to putting the vessels in the water.

By the end of April a fleet of seventy ocean-going and seaworthy ships had been lined up, together with complete data as to fuel and water capacity, accommodations, equipment, and fitting-out costs. To supervise and co-ordinate these activities, the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier appointed a reserve officer on his staff, Commander Vincent Astor—a yachtsman in his own right.

Supplementing the initial list of volunteers, the Cruising Club of America sent to its members an attractively printed folder prepared and signed by Commodore Stanford. His words set the tone and spirit of the entire venture:

"Many in our membership and those not members but known to us as blue water men, are excluded from naval service by reason of age, physical disability, eyesight disqualifications, responsibilities of family or dependents. They are, however, anxious and able to contribute to the sea war off our shores.

"To such men now comes a challenge and an invitation. Its auspices are such that all hands can be assured of intelligent, sympathetic, and authoritative consideration of the merits of any plan that can be worked out.

"As to the need for such activity, the loss of ships, particularly tankers, in our coastal waters, the rescue of survivors, and the possible detection of flights of carrier-based hostile airplanes, present problems too obviously matters of general knowledge to require further comment here.

"That the Axis naval strategy generating these attacks has as its objective the diversion of naval patrol and escort craft from present extended convoy duties is equally obvious and well known. The present convoy lines are long, our coastlines vast. It can reasonably be expected that it will be months, if ever, before extensive diversion of naval craft can be justified by even the present greatly accelerated construction program. The need, in short, may not be a temporary matter. . . .

"One thing is perfectly clear in any plan: the boats we are considering will find themselves in a hazardous position; the duty may be extremely hazardous. The Cruising Club wishes to put no compulsion on any man to volunteer for this duty. . . . We believe the spirit of our members will speak for itself.

"Your officers and the naval authorities believe that a vessel able to keep the sea for five days, hold position accurately through all weather, house and feed sufficient personnel to maintain continuous observation 24 hours every day, is a valuable vessel in terms of present needs. We prefer to express the qualifications this way rather than in terms of over-all length, tonnage, or any other arbitrary measurements. As to 'sufficient personnel,' the minimum crew would seem to be six. Two observers, working four hours on and four off, make four people. A cook, in charge of food and water and provisions as well as the preparation of food, is a full-time job. That makes five. A skipper-navigator in charge of the ship and responsible for her position and her people and gear, makes the total six. In addition, an enlisted rating as

communications officer may be assigned to each ship. . . . The minimum tour of duty would be at least five days at sea, followed by five days off station, including time to return to base, re-provision, and resume station. This enables you to appraise the usefulness of your ship.

"If we can assemble a fleet of 45 vessels able to race 620 sea miles to Bermuda, across the Gulf Stream, and return in normal peacetime competition, we might in time of war be able to recruit a fleet of at least twice this size. Such a patrol, with each ship covering only a ten mile circle, would create a protective screen from Cape Cod to Cape Lahave, Nova Scotia—merely as an example.

"In order to give the vessels chosen the status of public vessels, so that they can be repaired, provisioned, and fueled at government expense, it is proposed at present to either put them under direct charter to the Navy or to enroll them in the Coast Guard Auxiliary Reserve.

"As to the personnel, it may be desirable to enroll them in the Coast Guard Auxiliary Reserve to provide uniformed, naval status. Such enrollment, however, would involve an obligatory minimum service of only three months. This might be shortened to one month. If so enrolled, such volunteers would receive regulation Coast Guard pay. This would range up to $126 per month.

"In passing, it must be noted that the only duty contemplated for this present experimental flotilla is offshore, and operating under the District and the Sea Frontier orders. This project is not designed to disturb any existing harbor patrols. It is specifically an offshore patrol. . . ."

While the Cruising Club project was gaining momentum, the Commander in Chief of the United States Fleet gave his orders (already mentioned) to the effect that the Coast Guard, under the auspices of Sea Frontier commanders, should organize all types of craft, sail or power, for extensive offshore observation and

patrol. Thus the secret project of sailing vessels was engulfed temporarily in the larger public announcement of the Navy appeal for any types of small craft capable of keeping the sea. All along the Atlantic coast, the Auxiliary flotillas which had been used in harbor and inlet patrols rapidly expanded their services so that when the Coastal Pickets assumed formal organization, the sailing vessels were in the minority. Nevertheless, the Cruising Club proposal was brought to fruition when the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier developed a plan for a Coastal Picket base at Greenport, Long Island, from which only sailing vessels would operate, for the exclusive purpose of anti-submarine patrol.

3

ONE OF COMMODORE STANFORD'S most enthusiastic assistants was a young man familiar to all Cruising Club members as "Bud" Smith. Brought up in the familiar yachtsman's haunt of Port Jefferson, on Long Island, he had come early by his shrewd understanding of wind, tide, sail, and seamanship. When the Commodore needed a scout to visit owners of sailing vessels for the experimental fleet, "Bud" volunteered to call on members and obtain their promises of help. Subsequently, when the task of interviewing civilians for enlistment in the Coast Guard Auxiliary Reserve could best be done by one who knew the requirements, "Bud" found himself at the Coast Guard Headquarters in New York City. In the hectic days which followed the public appeal for volunteers for the Coastal Picket Patrol, his task was to size up the flock of applicants, pick out the most promising, and send them on to those who would swear them in, give them ratings, uniforms, basic training, and assignments.

After guiding many excellent yachtsmen into uniform, "Bud" was eventually offered a commission for himself—as Lieutenant in the Temporary Reserve of the Coast Guard. He was a typical example of the willing but physically disqualified, for he had one bad eye which had already stood between him and his desire to get into uniform. Fortunately, the Coastal Picket plan capitalized on exactly the type of person who was valuable to the project even though he could not measure up to high physical standards. Thus, with the waiver familiar to so many who had applied for admission, Smith became a Lieutenant. Subsequently, he was transferred to the staff of the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier

to assist Commander Astor. And when it was decided to establish a Coastal Picket base at Greenport, for sailing vessels only, Lieutenant Smith was chosen as one excellently qualified to organize and operate that base. Commodore Stanford's plan would at last be given its test, with Lieutenant Smith in command of the entire sailing vessel outfit.

Within a few weeks Smith had helped gather several sloops, ketches, yawls, and schooners at Greenport as a nucleus for the sailing fleet. The Schaeffer brothers started the project well by making an outright gift of their Bermuda racing yawls, *Wynfred* and *Edlu II*. The graceful lines of these vessels were still apparent after liberal quantities of standard Navy gray paint had been slapped from bowsprit to taffrail, and even over the conspicuous brightwork of the superstructure. As other craft were outfitted and commissioned for offshore patrol, they made a varied and impressive outfit. The largest was the hermaphrodite brig *Maddan,* 147 feet over-all. Next in size came Haskell's stately schooner *Valor*—112 feet—and Crowninshield's luxurious schooner *Cleopatra's Barge*—109 feet. Just to name a few of the other schooners, motor sailers, ketches, and cutters is enough to evoke familiar associations of peacetime cruising and racing days: *Jane Doré, Sea Gypsy, Red Head, Tamaris, Countess, Tradition, Avanti, Kidnapper,* and *Sunbeam.* When Charles Vose lent his *Sea Gypsy* he offered his own services and was made a Coast Guard skipper of his own schooner, with the rating of Chief Bosun's Mate. John Pugh went into service with his schooner *Bellatrix* for the duration, and he was also given a rating in the Temporary Reserve as Bosun's Mate, second class. Laurence and John Ely came to Greenport with their steel-hulled schooner *Askoy,* and as skipper and executive officer they were soon sailing her in the offshore patrol. In this volunteer manner the enterprise started—with some of the best known pleasure craft along the Atlantic coast, and guided firsthand by men whose sailing knowledge and ability had been acquired through years of experience. Many of the younger men who enlisted were so much at home on

sailing craft that they needed little training in seamanship. Some of them were sent directly to Greenport for crew service as soon as uniforms and equipment could be issued.

As crews for various craft were assigned, they went to work aboard ship, fitting out with the gear necessary for heavy-weather duty that lay ahead. During those summer weeks Lieutenant Smith managed to rent the *Highball,* a curiously sumptuous houseboat which was tied up at one of Tuthill's docks near the Greenport–Shelter Island ferry slip. Searching for something more suitable as a base for his growing family of sailors, Smith found and rented a small summer hotel on the shore, the old Booth House, next door to Sweet's Ship Yard, beside the Greenport Oyster Works. By the middle of summer a little grove of masts and spars had sprung up along the docks at Sweet's and Tuthill's. There were more and more uniforms on the streets, more and more signs of activity in Mr. Sweet's machine shop, more and more calls on the local merchants for provisions, gear, trinkets, beer.

4

ONE OF THE smallest sailing vessels in the Greenport fleet was the *CGR 3070,* a fifty-seven-foot yawl which had been familiar in Larchmont yachting circles as George Ratsey's pride and joy, *Zaida.* From his years of experience as expert sailmaker and yachtsman, Mr. Ratsey had dreamed of the perfect little ship which would answer all his latter-day needs by combining comfort and beauty with a fair amount of speed under sail. He knew what he wanted, because he had already experimented with so many other craft before *Zaida.* In the old days, during his boyhood and youth in England, he had mingled with the best yachtsmen of the world, had acquired the wisdom and shrewdness of his father, Thomas Ratsey.

The Ratsey name had been associated with excellent sailmaking for several generations. The old firm of Ratsey & Lapthorn, with headquarters at Cowes, had made sails for Nelson's history-making flagship *Victory.* Little wonder, then, that the sail loft at Cowes was a veritable museum of yachting lore, with models, mementos, and gear precious with sentimental associations and meaning. George Ratsey's father made history of his own in sailing his beloved *Dolly Varden* to frequent victories in many English races for more than forty years. But the lure of new fields tempted George Ratsey to leave Cowes in 1901, at the age of twenty-three, to try his luck at sailmaking in America. His sail loft at City Island became a branch office, with the traditional name, Ratsey and Lapthorn. Soon he was furnishing sails for all the America's Cup defenders—and for some of the challengers.

As the years went by, George Ratsey experimented with different types of craft. Nothing that carried sail was too small or

large for his all-inclusive interests. One season he might be carrying off honors in Star Class races; the next season might find him championing the virtues of dinghy racing—a sport to which he contributed much by importing a fleet of the little boats and by sailing them until their popularity was assured. At other times he participated in long-distance contests for cruising yachts. But as he grew older he set his mind on one ship which might combine all the virtues which appealed to him most. He took his problems to John Alden, then took Alden's blueprints to Henry Nevins. Gradually, the ship took shape. She had the sheer lines of a racing craft but was wide enough of beam to be comfortable and dry even with all sails set in a spanking breeze. At first she was rigged as a cutter, but later she had a jigger stepped abaft the rudder post and was thus converted into a yawl. Her over-all length provided ample room for one large cabin below, with rugs, bunks, cushions, and curtains over the portholes; then a trim little galley for'ard, and a fo'castle large enough for stowage of sails, sheets, and tackle. For comfort on cold days there was a little Dutch fireplace stepped into the after bulkhead of the cabin, alongside the entrance to the chart shelf handy to the companionway. Open any one of the leaded glass doors that hid the lockers in the cabin and you might find racks of glasses for old-fashioneds or highballs.

No wonder that *Zaida* was George Ratsey's pride and joy. By the time he was sixty years old he took more pleasure in cruising along within sight of the races in the Sound, with some of his old cronies aboard for good company. *Zaida* was well suited for an afternoon cruise and home to Larchmont for dinner, or for a week-end junket out beyond Montauk, where the open ocean gave better opportunity for displaying what she could do under balloon jib, staysail, mainsail, and jigger.

So far as sail and gear went, *Zaida* was a spoiled child: she had everything. There were all kinds of little gadgets to make her handle easily and gracefully. Those who sailed with Mr. Ratsey were always finding something on deck to exclaim over and to

admire. And it was enough just to take the tack or clew of a sail in your hand and study the exquisite artistry of the sailmaker's genius in sewing and stitching, as demonstrated by Mr. Ratsey's expert craftsmen.

If there was any loyalty more precious to George Ratsey than the mysterious subtleties of sailing vessels, as symbolized by *Zaida,* it was his deep loyalty to his adopted country. The second World War brought sad memories of the years from 1914 to 1918, when three of his own brothers had gone into service for England and had been killed in action. As this new conflict brought an even more cruel variety of suffering to his native land, he could feel it with accentuated pain because one of his own sons was there during the air blitz that spared neither towns nor villages. So it was not strange that he was moved to offer *Zaida* to the Navy and the Coast Guard for the duration. His sons at City Island handled the transaction, for the old gentleman was confined to his bed by an illness which eventually proved to be his last. But he followed her conversion with interest, and knew of her early cruises from Greenport as a member of the Coastal Picket Patrol. He had faith in her ability. There were larger ships in the fleet; but there was none which could outweather her, regardless of wind, seas, and storm. He had put his best knowledge into her, and she could take any amount of punishment.

5

THOSE OF US who were assigned as crew to *Zaida* were pretty happy about it. Some of us had seen her before she had her face lifted with war paint. One or two had even been on short cruises with Mr. Ratsey before the war. The rest of us spent the first day aboard peeking into every cubbyhole and corner, climbing down into the lazarette, opening up the hatch in the cockpit that covered the auxiliary Gray engine, yanking up the boards in the cabin deck and looking at the great chunks of lead that had been used for trim. She didn't need much lead inboard, because her keel alone weighed something like ten tons. I heard it said that her gross tonnage was twenty tons. She really had all the makings needed for her sudden change from lady of leisure to drudge-horse on the Picket line.

It took us about two weeks to get her ready for duty. First of all, the crew came dribbling along over a period of several days. I guess the skipper was aboard her first. His name was Curtis Arnall, and he had owned his own cruising cutter in the Sound. He had the advantage on the rest of us because he knew navigation and could take sights with a sextant. Somewhere he had learned the Morse code and could use flags for wigwag. So he rated his Chief Bosun's Mate insignia. We liked him, too, because he was able to unbend once in a while and crack a joke. It seems he had been an actor as well as a yachtsman, and just before he volunteered for service in the Coastal Pickets he had been playing different roles in radio drama. We all thought it was pretty funny when he confessed he had been acting the part of Buck Rogers just before he enlisted. We told him that not even a

superman like Buck Rogers had ever sunk a submarine with a fifty-seven-foot yawl!

I think the second man aboard *Zaida* was the exec, Joe Choate. He was a tall, quiet sort of fellow with brown eyes and blond hair. When the war got here he had been working in the Guaranty Trust Company in downtown New York. But as soon as word leaked out that the Navy was organizing sailing vessels for offshore patrol, that was the end of Joe's interest in banking. Ever since he was a student at Phillips Andover he had been picking up firsthand knowledge about sailing. His parents knew the Johnsons in Springfield, and they had taken him on some of their cruises down in Maine and Nova Scotia waters. I don't think he ever went on one of those fancy "round-the-world" cruises in Irving Johnson's famous schooner, *Yankee*. But all the Johnsons were pretty hot as teachers of sail, and Joe Choate picked up so much that, by the time he was a student in Dartmouth College, Arthur Johnson used to pay him to be second in command for summer cruises. Later, Joe went into partnership with someone and had his own sloop for a while; they took their wives along as crew on cruises down the coast from Gloucester to Cape Elizabeth, from Casco to Boothbay, Rockland, Bar Harbor, and all the way down to Nova Scotia. Joe probably had more practical experience knocking around offshore waters than the skipper himself; but he was too modest to ask for a Chief's rating. I heard that someone who knew Joe's ability before he came into the service said he should be able to get a Lieutenant's commission. Joe said no, he'd rather take a rating as Bosun's Mate, first class, so he could be sure he wouldn't get stuck on land. He was the kind that would rather sail than eat.

One of the crew that everybody took a shine to—and one of our best all-round sailors—was a Bridgeport boy named Toivo Koskinen. He had a friendly face, the lean hard body of an athlete, and the broad hands of a fellow used to heavy work. Whatever his Finnish name meant to him you couldn't tell, because he was born over here and didn't have any accent. No-

body knew how to pronounce his first name, and when we asked about it he just said, "Call me George." We did. George had been a little bit of everything from longshoreman to boilermaker. Just a few years before he came into the service, he had taken a fling at being an oysterman. He had gone into partnership with another fellow his own age—about twenty-seven—and they bought a knockabout sloop for an oyster boat. They were at the game long enough to make out pretty well. George said that some days he'd be worth hundreds of dollars, but as soon as the season was over he'd run through it all and have a hard time getting together enough clothing and gear for the next season. But those oystermen know all the tricks when it comes to sail or power. George was a shy sort of fellow until you got to know him. Every once in a while he'd start a funny kind of nonsense-talk in a clipped drawl that sounded like a poor imitation of W. C. Fields in the movies. On deck he'd bend knots faster than anyone else, and he always had tricky ways of securing a line around a hook. He could splice wire and rope so you couldn't worry it loose with a sailor's awl unless you put your mind to it. And he was strong. He thought nothing of pulling himself aloft to the spreaders, hand over hand up the shrouds, with his sneakers somehow giving him purchase against the taut wire. And whenever there was need for someone to go up to the top of the seventy-five-foot mainmast in the bosun's chair, George was always there, sticking one foot over the seat and climbing into place. If the yawl rolled a bit while he was aloft, it was a pretty sight to see him work his hands and feet to keep himself from being bumped against the stays and the mast—all the time carrying on that W. C. Fields banter if anyone on deck started kidding him and asking how he got way up there!

Two of the crew left college to enlist when they heard about the plan for sailing craft in the Coastal Picket setup. One of them was a Larchmont boy named Edward Jobson, who had just completed his freshman year at Williams. Jobbie was the youngest of the crew, but not youngest in windjammer experience. In fact,

his family knew the Ratseys well, and Jobbie had sailed as crew on *Zaida* back in the peaceful days when Mr. Ratsey always kept two hired hands aboard to do the dirty work and supply all the little touches that keep a ship bright with spit and polish. Jobbie carried on in the same manner. Whenever he was off watch he'd start puttering around the deck with a cloth, or worrying a halyard into a nicer coil so it would run free without snarling. If anyone at Greenport tracked ground oyster shells aboard or got the deck dirty, Jobbie would find the tracks and clean them up. He was very critical of anyone who didn't take every pain to keep Mr. Ratsey's property up to snuff. He had the typical yachtsman's scorn for the landlubber or the powerboat man, and would argue by the hour about the best types of rig, gear, sail. When he began to get liberty, he'd hotfoot back to Larchmont to get out his own little sloop in time for the late summer races. Busman's holiday. He never talked much about how he made out in those races, but he would admit that he'd done "pretty well."

The other college youngster was Ward Weimar, a medical student who had just finished his undergraduate work at Dartmouth. Ward didn't look much like a sailor, because he was not very strong. He had long thin hands that seemed to be more fitted for an artist than a doctor. He planned to be a surgeon. But he really hit it off well with the rest of us, because he was always cheerful and bright and witty. He could tell stories by the hour. When he got going on limericks, some of them pretty hot, he would chant one after the other to the old "Turili-Urili" tune. I bet he could reel off fifty verses. With his medical background, there was no question about who would be ship's doctor, which only meant that he would have charge of the first-aid kit. But he began to bring back a few jars and tubes of his own, with special stuff in them, and a little collection of knives and scalpels. Every time anyone would catch a fish, Ward performed an autopsy. His illustrated lecture to us, one day, on the sex life of a shark was about the funniest thing I ever heard.

There were a few others that came aboard for a short time, made a couple of patrols, then were transferred for one reason or another. But the mainstay of the crew included those I've mentioned—and one other. He was an Irish New Englander—short, stocky, and talkative—named Vance Smith. His home was in Swampscott, where his father had charge of a Coast Guard Auxiliary flotilla for inshore patrol. It turned out that Vance had taken a fling at all kinds of deep-water sailing. When he first came aboard he began to go over everything just the way Jobbie did. And pretty soon he and Jobbie and Joe Choate began swapping yarns about sailing experiences. Vance had been doing some Auxiliary patrolling of harbor and inlet waters around Swampscott; but when he heard about the Greenport plan, he came down to New York and enlisted. If there was one subject Vance knew better than sail it was sea. His experience wasn't just the kind you'd pick up by being in the Marblehead yacht races, year after year. He had plenty of that, but he also had the uncanny extra sense of sight and smell that Massachusetts fishermen have when they stand offshore in a fog or a sea turn, with a lobster-b't no bigger than an oversized dory, putt-putt ten miles out and fish all day, then without compass or anything head for shore and by nightfall come putt-putting back into the cove they left that morning. Nobody knows how they do it. They know what the wind smells like when it gets in a certain direction. They know how the currents set, and why the water looks different at different times. And somehow they put all that information together and use what they see and smell and hear as markers to get them home. Well, Vance had that knack. Of course, with his background, he liked to tinker with an engine even more than he liked to patch up a sail or splice a rope. But he seemed to do one as well as the other. If he hadn't weighed two hundred pounds, he would have been my idea of a real old sea dog, even at the age of twenty-six, because he certainly had the earmarks. He had the most salty line of chatter you'd ask to

hear; always used nautical terms and always flavored them with liberal sprinklings of cuss words.

By the time we were all aboard there were nine of us—all with some sailing experience. With a crowd like that, it didn't take too long to finish things up, put provisions aboard, get our radio telephone installed, ask for orders, and be ready for our first patrol.

6

JUST A FEW HOURS before our first patrol, we broke out the slim commission pennant and watched it flapping atop the mizzen like a patriotic necktie in the breeze. It sobered us all up a bit, because we knew that all the fooling around was done, and now we were ready to stand out for our station some fifty miles offshore. We kidded a lot about how we'd soon be shouting, "Stand by to ram submarine," but nobody expected there would be any picnic atmosphere when we got out there. So the commission pennant made us look for some omen of good luck, to make us feel better about the hard task ahead. We took in the lines that had secured *Zaida* at Sweet's Yard for those two make-ready weeks, pushed her away from the dock, and started the auxiliary engine. We had one last call before we shoved off—at Tuthill's dock to fill our fresh-water tanks and get gas. The skipper took the wheel and headed the bowsprit out of the cove. Unfortunately, he tried a short cut inside the channel buoy, and just as we were in full sight of Tuthill's we went aground. The keel grated in the mud and dirt, the deck lurched over, then righted. We all looked at each other and groaned. It was a bad start for *Zaida.* But the skipper put the engine in reverse, the keel ran free, and that was the end of our first worry.

At Tuthill's dock we put the last provisions aboard while the tanks were filling. There was no commissary department set up at the base then; in fact, there wasn't even the base, because the Booth House was just in the process of being converted. So we all were given subsistence allowance and were permitted to buy whatever we wanted. The skipper had made up a list of provisions, including meat, eggs, milk, and fruit. We had laid in

a good supply of canned stuff while we were still at Sweet's. Also, someone had suggested the bright idea of getting a local baker to roast some beef and bake a ham for us. We didn't have any baking oven in the galley, so all the meat cooked at sea would have to be put into the skillet or cut up for stews. While we were at Tuthill's Joe Choate and Smitty went up to collect the roasts, and we had quite a little ceremony when they came back with their arms full. The icebox in the galley was good-sized, but by the time we sailed it was crammed with cartons of milk, packages of liver and chops, plenty of butter, and the roasts.

Tanks full, everything stowed, and all snug aloft and below, we got our last instructions from Lieutenant Smith, who had come down to wish us luck, took in the lines from Tuthill's dock, and then headed out to the channel under power. As soon as we got past Shelter Island there was enough breeze for sail, so we hoisted the forestays'l, main, and mizzen. That made us feel as though we were really going places at last, and everyone was happy about it. I can't say that any of us was really anxious to run across a sub. As we rounded Montauk Point and headed out to sea, we couldn't help remembering that the German spies and saboteurs had been put ashore only a few miles down the coast—at Amagansett—by a U-boat. Looking at the empty beaches and the brush-covered dunes below Montauk, we could well understand why the Nazis had picked that Godforsaken stretch for a landing. We began looking out to sea a little nervously. But as soon as someone in the galley shouted, "Chow down," we forgot everything except that we were hungry. Two men stayed on watch in the cockpit on deck while the rest of us went below for mess in the cabin. There was a double drop-leaf table of varnished butternut wood secured with thumbscrews to the cabin deck just for'ard of the little Dutch fireplace. Some of us sat on the bunks on either side; the rest of us used little camp stools that weren't too steady when the yawl began to roll.

There was always a lot of beefing about the chow, but it was really good. Because we hadn't been assigned a cook, several of

us took turns at throwing a meal together. The skipper liked to cook, and since he had organized the watch in such a way that he would be entirely free for his duties as navigator and communications officer, he began to assume the general duties of cook, while the rest of us cleaned up the galley after meals. It didn't take us long to find out that we didn't think very highly of the skipper's cooking; but it was a little delicate to explain that to him. Smitty hit on the bright idea of waiting until the skipper was busy with his noon sight, then shouting, "Hey, George, wrestle up a little chow, will you?" George had already turned out some pretty fine cocoa, sandwiches, and scrambled eggs for those who had stood night watches with him, and everyone would have been glad to have him take over the galley. But Smitty always put him on the spot when he started bellowing for chow. George would quietly ask the skipper if he minded, and the skipper would sometimes say no. Then George would start whipping up something in the galley. As soon as we were called below, everyone would begin to rave about George's cooking. That just seemed to make the skipper more determined to show his own knack for slinging a meal together.

We sailed nearly twenty-four hours before we reached our station, which was about fifty miles offshore. It seems odd to call it a "station," because it was only a certain area of fifteen square miles plotted on our chart, and we had to depend on the skipper's reckoning to tell us when we had reached it. So far as appearances went, we might just as well have been sailing around in the middle of the Atlantic. In all directions, nothing but the uneasy ocean flattened out in all directions to the horizon. We could patrol our grid any way we wanted to, because our only assignments were to keep constant lookout while on station, to report any unusual occurrences, and to be prepared for such rescue operations as we might have a chance to carry out. On days when the weather permitted, we might take advantage of a good breeze to beat up into the wind on alternate tacks until we neared one edge of our station, then come about and sail

back toward the middle of the grid on a comfortable reach or run. That was exciting. Even those of us off watch below could hear the clatter of feet on the deck above, feel the yawl lay over as the sails began to draw, listen to the water sloshing past the hull, and catch snatches of familiar phrases sung out:

"Stand by to come about."

"Hard alee."

"Break out the jib."

"A little hard at the foot, sir."

"Slack her off just a trifle."

"Steady as she goes. Full and by."

The chances were that rough weather interrupted the fun soon enough. Then we were satisfied to let *Zaida* take life easy and ride the seas or swells hove to.

There is something very pretty about making a yawl behave properly when she is hove to. The trick is to find the best possible arrangement of wind and sail, so that they will counteract each other. All sailing vessels have their own whims and personalities, and there isn't any exact way of telling how to work out the desired end. But the principles are always the same. With *Zaida* we did it this way. First of all, the man at the wheel would round her bow up into the wind, then the crew would drop the jib and trim the stays'l sheet until the stays'l was backed slightly to windward. Next, the crew slacked off the storm trys'l until the yawl lost way, then the man at the helm would put the wheel hard over and lash it fast. If *Zaida* behaved properly, the backed heads'l would fill and the bow would fall off until the sails began to draw, then the yawl would slowly pick up headway until the rudder brought her up into the wind; right back where she started. Again she would pay off, and run quietly through the same little dance, hour after hour. She would stay roughly on course with a slight drift to le'ward, all the time cutting that slow series of little scallops. Usually, she would make about a knot while hove to. Under different strengths of wind and different kinds of sea, she might take a little fussing before

we could find just the right adjustment of her sails to make her behave. After a few tries we had most of *Zaida's* peculiarities figured out. Once we had all snugged down, only the two on watch had to worry about submarines. The rest of us would drop a fishline overboard, fool around with odd jobs, or go below and sleep. Mostly sleep.

I don't know why it was that we always felt sleepy. Of course the routine of the watches didn't often work out so that anyone could get anything like an eight-hour stretch of sleep. The two men who stood the mid-to-four watch would only have about two hours in their bunks before the clatter of dishes and the smell of Java and bacon from the galley would wake them up. If they slept until the fellows began shouting the breakfast "Chow down," that would usually be the end of their cat nap. And if they slept through that, there would be the noise of five or six men gathering around the table, rattling silver and mugs and plates, talking and laughing. Often I would be so tired and sleepy after the mid-to-four watch that I'd decide not to pay any attention to all the breakfast noises even after they had waked me up. But knowing there wouldn't be any chance to sleep until all that chatter and clatter was over, I'd haul out of my sack and shoulder a place for myself at the board, grab a mug, pour myself a steaming puddle of black coffee, and nurse that along until I was awake enough to stand up and dig into the platter of scrambled eggs and bacon. The detachable racks along the sides of the table and leaves were always in place to keep dishes from sliding off. It didn't take us long to learn to fill our mugs only half full of Java to save from slopping all over everything. As soon as I had finished eating, I'd hit the sack again and sleep for another stretch of hours before my next watch came around.

The crew used to waste a lot of time arguing about which was the worst watch to stand. Of course it all depended on the weather. But taking all alike, there wasn't much to choose between them. You might even say that each watch had something in its favor. The daylight watches from eight to noon and noon to

four were pretty much the same. Even with nothing in sight on the horizon, there was always the business of trying to keep a bright eye peeled for periscopes or telltale feathers of wake where the periscopes might be. Of course we would keep imagining that we were seeing things. Let the wind change enough to kick rollers into a chop, and there would be all kinds of lights and shadows on the water during daylight, so that you would be sure that you saw at least a dozen periscopes before the end of each watch. And just the constant thinking about what might happen was enough to give you the feeling that there was no friendly vessel within a hundred miles of *Zaida*. Then you might sight a ship hull down on the horizon, and it would be a relief to worry that blurred image through the binoculars until she had disappeared or until her course brought her near enough to be recognized for what she was: a Navy PC boat or possibly even a destroyer. That would make you feel better and think that you were really a part of the whole big hide-and-seek game going on along our coast, all the way from Monhegan Island to Key West.

Another kind of excitement during daylight watches was the occasional appearance of blimps and planes. The planes would sight us after we had sighted them; would suddenly change course and come down to give us the once-over. On bright days that would be pleasant enough, and we would always call down below to say we had a caller. Sometimes the pilot would dip his wings as a kind of hello, then bank around toward his original course. But on foggy or cloudy days, we could hear planes without being able to see them. Then the throbbing noise of those powerful motors would sound like the growling of a hungry dog looking for a good hunk of meat. We always had the feeling that the plane might mistake us for a submarine in the fog; might see us just as she was passing over, impulsively drop a couple of eggs on us, and blow us to hell. Those days, we might not see the plane at all; but sometimes a plane would come thundering out of low clouds that made the roar louder than ever, might zoom so low she seemed no higher than our mainmast, then dis-

appear in the haze as fast as she had come. That gave us the creeps. Smitty was always the old Calamity Jane. Every time we would see one pouncing on us out of the low clouds, Smitty would bellow, "Hold your hats, boys, here we go!" And if the plane circled and came back for another look, that just made matters worse. But none of them ever made a mistake, I'm glad to say. I'd hate to be on the deck of a submarine and hear that same thundering roar of motors overhead.

The daylight watches were just as monotonous as the night watches for me. Four hours of searching the tumbling seas is too long for any really efficient lookout duty. Fortunately, with two on watch while we were hove to, each of us could act as lookout. At first I thought there was absolutely no sign of life that far away from shore. But after a while we began to find there was a good chance of seeing whales or sharks or blackfish or porpoises if we were sharp enough. The worst part of having them come around was that they always seemed masquerading as submarines. Take a whale, for instance. For hours you might have been sweeping the four quarters of the compass, hoping and fearing that you were going to find something. Nothing. Then all of a sudden there can be no mistake about it: a great black object rises out of the water two miles off the port bow and slowly disappears. Before you know what you are doing, you are on your feet, pointing and shouting, "Submarine surfacing, two points off the port bow." Feet clattering on the companionway, and voices shouting, "Where? Where?" And all you can say is, "They must have seen us; submerged now." Then you see it again, point nervously, and blurt out, "No, there it is: there! There!" Someone lets out a relieved string of cuss words and says, "You stupid so-and-so, can't you tell the difference between a sub and a whale?"

After a while, I learned to.

But porpoises could be just as bad at a distance—at least for a second or two. Right in your line of vision there would suddenly be a definite black spot; then it would be gone. No matter

how many times I saw them, if they were far enough away to be indistinct they always made something turn over inside me. Then I would see others around and might save myself from the embarrassment of making the old mistake, and shouting, "Submarine!"

Sharks are a different kind of nuisance. They don't show up too far away, because they haven't as much to show. But if you are looking halfway to the horizon, and you see out of the tail of your eye something dark that sticks straight out of the top of a roller only fifty yards off; something that is cutting the water at a slow rate of speed and is leaving a little feather of wake behind it—it is probably a dorsal fin; but it certainly looks like a periscope for a split second!

When the first surprise was over, there would always be fun in having these watery pals come around for a friendly call. Whales are all right if they stay to le'ward and don't blow their stinking vile belches down wind. Porpoises are the most fun, because they are so playful. They liked to fool around the bowsprit, particularly when we had enough sail up to send *Zaida* slapping along through moderately rough seas. Sometimes a couple of porpoises would stick around for ten or fifteen minutes, and those of us not on watch would go for'ard and stretch out on the deck to get a close view of them swimming just under the water almost within reach of our hands. Jobbie always climbed out on the bowsprit and lay down to watch them. Their little pig-eyes would be open, staring up with pleasure at the way *Zaida's* bow cut the seas and kept the bone in her teeth. Sometimes they would dive under the bow and come up on the other side, as though the whole business was a great lark and a fancy kind of game. Then they would grow tired of exploring and would streak off through the water.

Sharks were the most stupid visitors we had. They always looked so ugly when they began snooping around the waterline of the yawl, fin showing or completely below the surface. The low freeboard on *Zaida* gave us a fine chance to study them

whenever they came alongside. Once in a while we would fix up a little shark bait on a special hook we had bent and filed from a copper bolt. The shark would swim around and past the hook, without much show of interest, swim away until he had room for a little burst of speed, then come tearing in with a swish and roll, until we could see his nasty curved mouth full of teeth and his white belly, just as he struck the hook. Then the crew would stop whispering and would let out a chorus of jeers and curses while the shark churned up the water and tried to shake the hook out of his jaw. The trouble with even the six-footers was they didn't have much fight in them and could be hauled flapping on deck without too much trouble.

Another kind of entertainment that never failed during all kinds of weather was the sight of Mother Carey's chickens, skimming along astern of *Zaida* in search of any crumbs or scraps that might be thrown overboard. At times there would be only one of the little fellows flitting over the swells and dancing now and again with his feet barely touching the water, while he hovered and spread the white feathers of his tail into a fan for support. But let someone toss a handful of scraps over the side, and out of nowhere six or eight of the little black scavengers would start fluttering, circling, hovering astern of us. They were always so graceful and lively, never seemed tired enough to need rest. We wondered where they nested and why they bothered to spend most of their time so many miles offshore; but we were always glad to have them around. They made us feel less lonesome.

Night watches had their own special features. In clear weather there was always the pleasure of getting acquainted with the stars, recognizing old friends and picking out our favorite constellations. When there was a moon the great creature climbing out of the sea to the east was always an impressive sight. Then to watch her climb the sky through broken clouds, always with a moving path of silver-gold stretching from her to us across the restless water, was a sight that never grew tiresome. It wasn't just the path of light that mattered; the whole surface of the

ocean would change, even when the moon was growing through her first quarter. Heavy clouds couldn't entirely shut out the light enough to make us forget the serene lady whenever she was up there. Nights when there were neither stars nor moon, time seemed to drag heaviest. Two of us on watch would talk ourselves out after a while, and just sit in the cockpit staring at the blackness all around us. Ears took the place of eyes, and we would listen to the different sounds of water slapping around the hull and under the taffrail. Occasionally, if we talked in low voices, one of us would stop in the middle of a sentence, certain there had been a different noise that didn't sound like the water made under the rail. There was no need to say, "Listen." We would sit there, straining to hear something that might have been nothing more than a new combination of seas gurgling and sloshing almost within reach of our hands. After a little the conversation would begin again, always low and deliberate, so we could listen overside between pauses. That kind of watch made me more tired than a watch kept with moon and stars for company. It would always seem longer between the hourly reports over the radio telephone.

Somehow we liked to hear the radiophone tubes warming up and the static beginning to crackle through the loud-speaker. That phone was our one sure proof that we had not been completely neglected and forgotten by those ashore. Usually there was no reason for us to make reports at the hourly times; but it was nice to listen for the voices of men on the other Picket boats and see what they had to say. Once each night we would have to check in with the shore radio station just to let them know that our set was in order and that all was well with us. No matter how routine that might become, it was always an occasion when *Zaida* spoke her little piece and she was acknowledged by the crisp voice of the monitor in the radio station on shore.

The skipper always wanted to handle the reports himself. He was a light sleeper, and seemed to wake up automatically as soon as the hour came for making that routine report. He would

come groping through the cabin darkness to the chart shelf where the phone was stowed, stand there in the dim red glow of the companionway bulb, fiddle with the dials a little, and pick up the mouthpiece. If there were any messages for us in the night, he would always insist on taking them down; then he would insist on breaking the code himself, after lengthy poring over the code book. Nobody said anything. That was the job he had assigned himself, and there wasn't anything we could do about it, no matter how much we itched to speak into the instrument and hear the shore monitor answer us with the familiar words and sentences.

The skipper was also jealous about handling all the details of navigation. On clear days he would carefully lift the sextant out of the drawer beneath the chart shelf, climb out and take a squint at the sun, then come down the companionway, haul out his tables, figure and fuss for a while until he had made a few significant lines and crosses on the chart. He never dated his crosses, never explained to anyone how near his plot came to the dead-reckoning position, so we were pretty much in the dark as to just where we were on our grid; as to just where we might expect to make our first landfall when we sailed for the base at the end of each patrol. With so little to do on station, it was not surprising that we were quick to find any little excuse for beefing. It helped to pass the time. And none of us had been indoctrinated enough with the ways of Navy or Coast Guard discipline to think that there was anything wrong in criticizing a Chief Petty Officer. So his little peculiarities became the favorite topic of conversation. I suppose he had some notion that a skipper was obliged to keep himself apart from his crew, and I can see how his behavior might have been quite in keeping with the best traditions aboard a good-sized ship, where the skipper has his own cabin and can keep himself apart. But aboard *Zaida,* where there were six bunks in the main cabin and two in the fo'castle, there wasn't much chance for the skipper to count on escaping from the give-and-take of our community life. To make matters worse for him, all

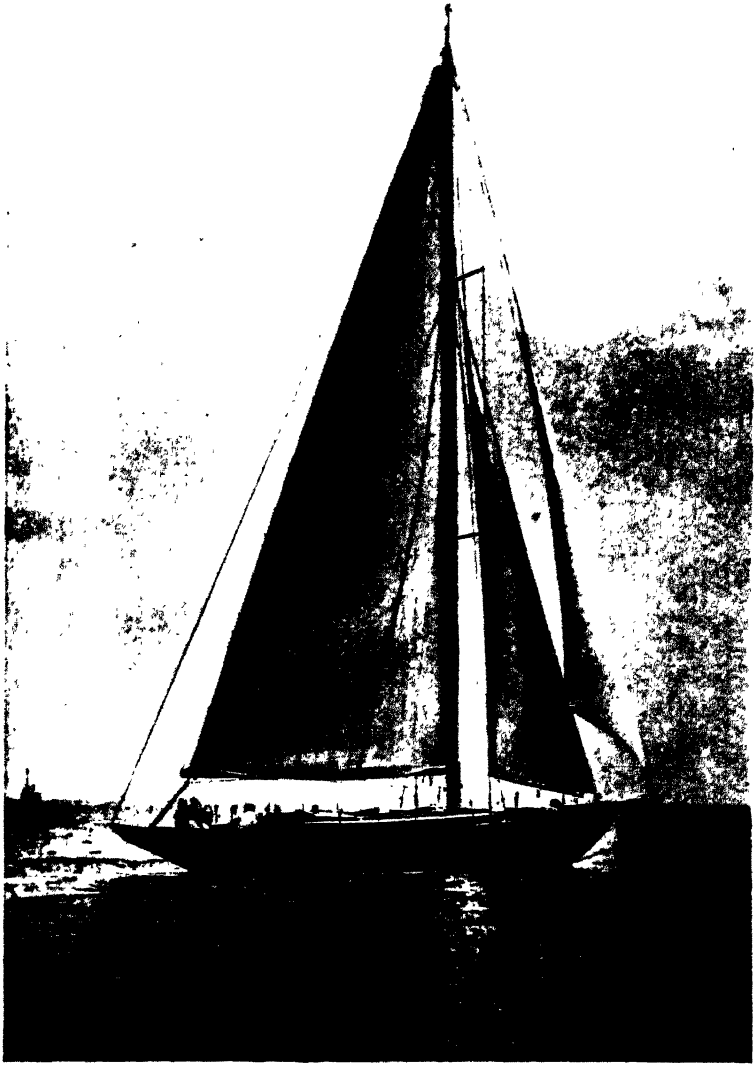
of us were volunteers who had just come into the service and hadn't even been given the kind of "boot" training most crews have. That made the skipper's assignment much harder than it might have been on a regular Navy or Coast Guard vessel. Thinking back on it now, I kind of feel sorry for him.

You get nine men penned up in a ship as small as *Zaida* and they soon get to know each other pretty well. By the end of the first patrol, you would have thought we had been shipmates together for years. Of course such a setup brought out all the faults as well as the good points in jig time. The little peculiarities didn't amount to much. For example, Jobbie got his nose out of joint, being the good yachtsman he was, whenever he saw somebody careless about tidying up, on deck or down below. He could lash out at you with his tongue, and the tone of his voice was enough without the words. Smitty was generally good-natured and gay, but if something rubbed him the wrong way he'd cut loose and swear like a seagoing parrot. He was forever worrying about little things; stumbling down the companionway to study the chart and wonder whether we were on station. That used to set the skipper's teeth on edge. Joe Choate turned out to be the tactful one who was always quick to save those situations with soothing remarks whenever tempers got hot. George was the quietest of the bunch and didn't have much to say if arguments got started; just did his work, stood his watch, then hit the sack until someone shouted, "Chow down." He always got up to eat. Ward Weimar seemed to have the strongest stomach, but whenever the weather got rough he would begin to look a little green around the gills. At one time or another most of us took our turns feeding the fishes and then suffering with the dry heaves. But nobody paid much attention to that, and remarks were generally sympathetic.

Our first patrol was a pretty good one. When we got back to our base, several of the new fellows were down at the dock waiting for us and curious to know what the cruise had been like. Had we seen any submarines? And how many did we sink? We

told them that nothing had happened; that it had been pretty dull. Later we heard that other Picket boats had brought back stories about subs surfacing right alongside them in the darkness, of German voices heard across the water. We said we'd make up some stories of our own next time; sorry to disappoint them.

We were glad enough to get ashore and stretch our legs. Some of the crew got forty-eight-hour leaves; but most of us stayed to do odd jobs aboard *Zaida* so she would be ready in five days for her next patrol. We slept aboard during that in-between period. Evenings we were free to do the town. The girls were friendly, and apparently the Coastal Picket Patrol boys were considered pretty hot stuff around town, so that made it nice. Practically every evening, before too late, there would be a little crowd of sailors clomping into Claudio's bar near Tuthill's dock for a couple of beers. Lots of chatter and nonsense, a few tries at singing, with bad harmony and barbershop chords. Joe Choate would pick up his glass and ease into the chair at the battered upright piano that looked as though it had grown old with the bar. As soon as he had his beer glass snug at one end of the keyboard and an ash tray at the other, he would start tickling the keys slowly. A few of us always found chairs at a near-by table so we could watch his hands. He played very well, with lots of tricky variations on old favorites—"Whispering," "Stormy Weather," "Margie," and "Put on Your Old Gray Bonnet." Any popular song that was asked for, he could play, and always different from what you'd expect. There were times when he would get going slow on something familiar like "I Wonder What's Become of Sally," and it made you feel a little sad after a couple of beers. That would be the time when you could tell from the faces that a lot of the boys wished they weren't so far away from home. But then Joe would shift over to something hot, and feet would start tapping under the table or against the bar. The bartender thought Joe was worth his keep, at least to the extent of a few beers on the house, and the empty glass got replaced with a full one pretty often.



Courtesy Morris Rosenfeld

ZAIDA

Cutter-rigged. Later she was converted into a yawl

After a while we'd call it a day and walk back to *Zaida.* She always seemed so demure and innocent when she was made fast to the dock in the starlight. You couldn't make it seem real that she was the same lively lady that did so much dancing about in the chop off Montauk or rolling and pitching on station. We all got fond of her in a short time, and would pretty her up in little ways before we were due for our next assignment.

On our second patrol nothing happened to speak of, until we were on our way back to base, at night. The weather hadn't been too good, because it was getting on in the fall and the storms seemed more frequent. As we came in past Montauk, a heavy fog closed in and the familiar lighted buoys didn't show. So the skipper set his course with extra care. But just when we were off Gardiners Island, there was a jolt and a crunching sound, as though we had rammed someone. *Zaida* swung about and almost capsized. She righted herself, but we were aground on a shoal. The skipper came tearing up the companionway, accused Jobbie, at the wheel, then started giving him hell for carelessness. We were under power, with no sails set, so there was nothing to do but try reversing the engine and backing off. It took a little time, but off she came. Afterwards, there was plenty of beefing about the scene the skipper had made. *Zaida* was tender and responded to the least rudder; but those of us who had stood watch with Jobbie knew he could keep the ship's head on course better than most. He had had too much experience to make that kind of mistake. Whoever was at fault, the damage was serious. On the next patrol, when we were hove to, Smitty swore he could feel the keel kick over at the end of a heavy roll, and told the skipper the keel was loose. The skipper didn't think so. But when we got back to base the next time *Zaida* was hauled out at Sweet's Yard. Before she was entirely out of the water we could see there was a cant in the keel, and a great hunk of lead had been gouged out of the for'ard edge. It took several days to fix her up.

After a few of those little accidents piled up, there was an undercurrent of uneasiness on the part of the crew. In Novem-

ber one of our men went up and asked Lieutenant Smith if he could be transferred to another boat in the fleet. It turned out that several others had already made the same request. None of them had any good reason for wanting to be transferred, so nothing was done about it. Just after Thanksgiving we all came back from leave with the hope that some changes would have been made while we were away. Smitty was the most violent in his protest against sailing again on *Zaida,* and a few men went with him to call on Lieutenant Smith. But Lieutenant Smith had gone to New York to get some information on a reorganization of the Temporary Reserves. The exec at the Booth House told Smitty that the weather would probably make up so bad that afternoon that we wouldn't sail anyway until the next day. So we all went back aboard. The sky did look nasty, and there was a fine drizzle of rain, with promise of enough wind for a blow outside. But all the provisions were aboard, the tanks full of water and gas, everything set. Around 1700 that afternoon the skipper said to cast off and take in the lines. Some of the men were pretty quiet and touchy; but out we went for one more patrol.

7

WE HAD ABOARD three new men who had been with us only a short time. Most of us were kids in our twenties, except for Joe Choate, who was thirty-three, and the skipper, who was forty-five. These three new men were no youngsters. One was a Brooklyn taxi driver; the other two were old hands at the sea. The taxi driver, Ted Carlson, had seen some pretty hard life during his forty-one years; but religion and vegetarianism had got him somewhere along the way. When he was off watch he would sit around the cabin with his Bible in his hands, reading his daily assignment. He told us that he was a Christian Scientist, but it didn't show up in any way, except he was always sort of Pollyannaish about everything. He didn't have any particular aptitude aboard ship and often got the dirty jobs like peeling the potatoes, pumping out the bilges with the little hand pump on deck, washing the dishes, and stowing sail in the fo'castle. He did it all, but he didn't seem to take any pleasure in it. Every time there was a detail that might involve him, Carlson would dig out his Bible and do a little heavy reading.

Another of the older men was Arnold Windsor, forty, who had owned a thirty-foot sailboat for some years. He was a handy man at the wheel and capable at odd jobs like splicing and rigging sail. He had a knack for marlinespike seamanship in general, kept the ends of ropes whipped, and sewed up seams that chafed through. If anyone wanted the ditty bag for anything, it was pretty safe to assume that Windsor had it.

Jim Watson was the third of the newer men, and he was quite a character. He was short and slight of build, wiry and quick in his actions. His seagoing experience was longer and different

from that of all the rest of us put together, you might say. He had been a fisherman off the Grand Banks for many years and had also gone farther north, hunting seal. On those sealing cruises his ship would be out during several months of winter weather. We used to try to get him talking, because he had quite a collection of true sea stories, many of them out of his own life. He didn't talk easily but when on watch different things would get him started and he'd tell how such an incident reminded him of the time a ship capsized on a reef, broke up, and all hands were lost; of the time his crew brought back the captain dead and kept him on ice until he could be handed over to the undertaker. Pleasant little tales to pass the long hours of night watch.

All the men, new and old, seemed to have some misgiving about the patrol that started just after Thanksgiving. It was partly the way the weather had been acting, partly the fact that the good fall days were done and *Zaida* wasn't exactly designed for winter weather. We had stepped a cute little potbellied cast-iron stove fast to the bulkhead between cabin and galley, and had used it enough to find it would burn the blocks of pressed coal in fine style when we were on a starboard tack. When we came about on a port tack, the wind blew down the vent and filled the cabin with smoke. But it was better than nothing and worked pretty well when we were hove to on station. We also used the fireplace if the weather behaved. Smitty always found the head too cold, those fall days, and used to build a little blaze in the fireplace before he retired for his morning meditations. It used to be a standard joke. Someone would always have a few words of praise for Smitty's bowels, as soon as he started breaking up a crate or crumpling paper for the fireplace.

The same old banter went on, as we headed out for our station this time, but there didn't seem to be so much of it. Once past Montauk, we found that the sea was building up, and for the next five days the sea ran unusually high. First one fellow would be sick, then another. By the last two days of our patrol, all of us had been sick enough to make us look forward with extra

eagerness to solid land and a few good nights of sleep. The day before we should have been relieved we got a message from the base advising us to proceed several miles on an easterly course to investigate a possible submarine contact. That wasn't very good news for us, because it meant that we would have to beat back to our station in the teeth of winds that threatened to reach gale strength. But we set more sail and proceeded to the rendezvous, several miles off station. While we were out there another message came over the radio: small-craft storm warning. Jeers and violent language from the listeners aboard *Zaida.* A helluva time to find that out. What landlubber was in charge of weather predictions, and how far inland was his station? Shut up and listen, someone shouted. The message continued: the northwesterly wind might build up to thirty knots. The listeners aboard *Zaida* let out scornful jeers. Somebody called up to the men on watch in the cockpit and asked them to estimate the present wind velocity. Silence. Then, "About thirty-five to forty." Maybe we should send storm warnings ashore!

We were hove to at the time, and had sighted no evidence of the possible sub. Some of us were a little worried to see the way the northwest wind made us sail even with sails backed. *Zaida* seemed to make too much headway, and the combination of wind and current might set us in toward every sailor's dread: a lee shore. We asked the skipper, but as usual he kept his thoughts pretty much to himself. We knew he couldn't say exactly where we were because he hadn't been able to use his sextant for more than twenty-four hours, and the radio direction finder was out of order. All that afternoon the hairy clouds racing low across the ocean shut out the sun, and all that night there were no stars. It looked as though we were in for trouble.

That next morning, December 3, was the end of our patrol, and we kept near the radiophone, hoping to hear an early clear-message from the Picket boat sent to relieve us. The longer we waited and listened, the stronger the wind blew and the more the seas built up. Perhaps our relief had not sailed; then we should

be told. Growling and nervousness among the crew. After a while the skipper said that if the storm kept building that way we might have to stay put long enough to ride it out. Groans from the seasick boys who had taken beating enough.

Then the voice came over the loud-speaker. The shore station again, calling in all Coastal Picket boats because of an expected blow that might build up to forty-five knots before the end of the day. So what? We estimated the wind was already stronger than that. *Zaida* was bouncing through rollers and chop like a cockleshell, and water kept coming over the fo'castle hatch in drenching sheets. When the yawl put her bowsprit under, the spray drove aft and soaked the lookout and the man at the wheel. If we started for the base we would have to beat into heavy seas just enough off the wind to make the going tricky, even under power of the little auxiliary engine. If we kept sailing hove to, we could weather the blow better. Jobbie was at the wheel, and from the way he kept licking spray off his lips, spitting and swearing, we knew he was having enough trouble keeping the seas head on. As each roller started to lift the bow, Jobbie would put the helm down slightly and ease the yawl up to the crest, then ease her off a bit and slide down the roller into the trough. It seemed enough to ask of anyone, just keeping the nervous little lady up into the wind without trying to go anywhere in particular.

The only trouble with that was the possibility that we were already so far northeast of our station that we might be getting into shoal water. Smitty said so first. He pointed to the nasty water off the port beam and said the whitish color was sand being churned up from the bottom. It certainly looked like it. When Smitty went below and told the skipper we were in shoal water, the skipper brushed him off flatly with a disgusted "Nonsense." But Smitty was the kind of fellow who would argue with God or the devil, and he started trying to convince the skipper. Words grew hotter and hotter. Joe Choate tried to shut Smitty up, but he had to admit that Smitty might be right. The upshot

of it was that all three of them began a little parade between the chart shelf and the cockpit. Smitty argued that we must be on Nantucket Shoals and in danger of capsizing; the skipper said we were well south of Martha's Vineyard; perhaps as much as twenty miles south of No Mans Land. At last Smitty made the skipper admit that wherever we were, that dirty water meant we were in trouble and would need help. Back they climbed over the coaming of the companionway hatch, and the skipper turned on the radiophone while Smitty bent over the chart. Pretty soon the skipper began calling the shore station, and when he got an answer he stated that we were in need of assistance; that our position was about twenty miles south of No Mans Land.

Smitty, who had just turned away from the chart in disgust, was suddenly thrown by an unexpected pitch and roll of the yawl. His face met up with the edge of the metal bulkhead, and he fell forward with a crash on the cabin deck. There he lay, stunned a little, with both hands over his face. We pulled and hauled until we had him up on a bunk, and didn't have to ask where he was hurt. The sharp edge of the bulkhead had done a mean job. Blood ran from an ugly gash in his forehead, his nose was flattened and broken, and there was a hole in his upper lip as though his teeth had been driven through. Ward Weimar got out his first-aid kit and started mopping and patching with bandages and adhesive tape, while the rest of us just stood around helpless and watched. After Ward was through, we put Smitty in one of the le'ward bunks and lashed him in with sail stops so he wouldn't get thrown. He had been seasick the day before, and this new mess didn't help him any.

After that beginning, trouble came thick and fast. As the storm kept building up toward a sixty-knot gale, *Zaida* had more and more trouble. The violent gusts made the long mainmast bend like a whip, the stays and shrouds whistled and screamed, the heavy storm trys'l slatted and snapped until a tear appeared in the luff at the foot of the sail. To make matters worse, water seemed to be leaking into the bilges from somewhere, and that scared

us. We took up some floor boards in the cabin deck and bailed with buckets, because the deck pump worked so slowly. Watson, who had been tinkering with the broken radio direction finder, said the spray beating down through the companionway hatch had soaked it just enough to throw it out of kilter. So he braced himself against the locker beside the little potbellied stove and held the heavy machine in his arms to get it dried out.

About noon, calamity hit us. Above the screeching of the wind topsides, we heard the awful sound of tearing canvas, the sharp cracking and flapping of loose ends, and shouts for help from Jobbie and Carlson on watch. We found out afterwards. The shackle had carried away at the head of the storm trys'l; the slides came down in a stream of sparks; the slacked-off, billowing canvas had burst out of its bolt ropes. Before anyone could do anything the yawl fell off the wind until she was caught broadside in the trough of the heavy seas; then the next breaker, a big one, towered over us, viciously, like a beach swell swamping a toy boat. The breaker crashed, and *Zaida* keeled over on her portside with a groaning clatter. Her tilted deck was completely buried under a great sheet of green water that seemed powerful enough to send us all to the bottom of the ocean. But as the breaker passed over, *Zaida* staggered back and righted herself, then lurched violently to starboard. She was hurt, but still afloat.

Down below, the crew was tossed about like dice in a box. Those on the starboard side were thrown bodily across the cabin to port, then picked up and thrown back against the starboard bunks. Before they could pull themselves together, a flood of water crashed down the companionway hatch, lifted the chart-conning skipper, and swept him on hands and knees all the way through the cabin to the galley. The heavy table, wrenched loose from the cabin deck with floor boards and all, smashed itself against the bulkhead over Ward Weimar's bunk. Two men were badly hurt, but we didn't know it at the time. Poor Watson, caught with the heavy radio direction finder on his lap, was thrown solidly against a lower portside bunk, and while he was

down the potbellied stove tore loose and fell on top of him. Joe Choate had just come off watch and was lying on one of the lower starboard bunks. When *Zaida* went over, Joe was tossed clear across the cabin and landed with a thud against the solid port handrail secured to the cabin overhead. He struck on his forehead and got a nasty cut about three inches long, from his left eyebrow straight up into his hair. The rest of us were tossed into crazy positions, all in a heap together, with blankets, heavy-weather gear, boots, books, and personal effects piled on top of us. We all fought to get untangled from the mess, because the water was soon sloshing around the cabin a good foot deep, and we thought we were sinking. Clouds of smoke and steam filled the cabin as the water met the fire in the stove.

As soon as we could get on our feet we scrambled for the deck. It seemed certain that Jobbie and Carlson must have been swept overboard. While someone fought back the companionway hatch, the rest of us started shouting to them, but we couldn't tell with all that clatter below whether they answered or not. By the time we got up the companionway we could see them both, soaking wet and scared. Jobbie was hanging over the wheel, gulping and pointing off to le'ward. We looked, and saw our precious yellow life raft bobbing along like a cork on the chop. It had been washed out of its cradle atop the cabin overhead. We couldn't do anything about it. Carlson, draped over one corner of the cockpit, was coughing and waving toward the taffrail. The mizzenmast had carried away just above the gooseneck; the shrouds still held fast, so the sail and broken mast were dragging in the water. George went into action first. He went below for the ax, climbed back, and started hacking away at the mizzen shrouds to cut the useless mast free. Carlson added to the madness by shouting at him, "Don't cut that wire, you'll dull the ax." George didn't pay any attention; just went on hacking until the afterdeck was clear except for the stump of the mizzen.

Jobbie and Carlson tried to tell us what had happened. Both of them had been buried under an avalanche of water. Jobbie

said he held his breath and wrapped himself around the wheel for several seconds before he opened his eyes; then all he could see was that he was still under water. We started telling him what had happened below, but Joe Choate bellowed at us and told us to get the hell below and form a bucket brigade. We piled down the companionway, hauled out pans from the galley, and settled down to almost two solid hours of bailing. The more we bailed, the more we had to bail. The following seas broke over the taffrail as we ran before the wind, and water pouring into the cockpit drained partially into the engine room and the head, then into the cabin. After a long time we had the water down below the level of the cabin deck. To keep it there, more bailing was done every hour or two. Smitty worried us by saying he was sure the seams had opened.

While we were bailing we saw the cut on Joe Choate's head, and the stream of blood that kept trickling down his face as he crouched over the hatch in the cabin deck. After a while he grew so weak from loss of blood that he stopped bailing and just lay back, exhausted. We helped him to his feet, and Ward took a look at the gash in his forehead. He said stitches would have to be taken; better not touch it. So we eased him into his bunk and lashed him there with more sail stops. Joe just lay there sopping up the blood with towels until it clotted and stopped.

Poor Watson was hurt worst of all. He said he knew he had some ribs broken because he heard them crack when the direction finder and the potbellied Shipmate hit him. You could tell from his face that he was in serious pain, but Ward didn't have anything to give him, except aspirin. By the time we had him patched up and lashed in his bunk, the cabin looked like quite a little sick bay. But we tried to cheer the men up by telling them we'd be rescued before dark.

By the middle of that afternoon help was in sight. Without our hearing it, a big Army bomber started circling around us and blinking some kind of message at us with a light. The skipper went on deck with the Aldis lamp and answered. Before he could

blink much of a message, the big plane leveled off and disappeared in the haze. We expected he would bring back a patrol boat of some kind before long, and that would be the end of our troubles. All of us dreaded to see how early it was getting on toward dusk, because we had no idea how far out to sea we might be blown if no rescue came before night. But it grew darker and darker, until we couldn't even see the bowsprit. We tried to keep a bright lookout, but the wind blew colder and colder, until snow began to drive hard in our faces like frozen rain. That evening we stood watches only an hour long. As the fellows came below, freezing cold and soaking wet from the spray, they would be so worn out that they just fell on their bunks, or on the cabin deck, boots and all. Wherever they lay, we'd cover them up with soaking wet blankets and hope their own body heat would dry them out. As the night dragged on, we gave up thinking about being found until daylight. If only we could keep *Zaida* from capsizing we might get things back into some kind of shape; might even patch up sail and start beating back toward shore. But it was a long night, cold—and black as a pocket.

1115686

8

IN NEW YORK CITY the Control Room at Headquarters of the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier was a troubled place on the morning of December 3. The violent storm which had damaged *Zaida* had thrown all shipping into a turmoil from Norfolk to Halifax. Those on land had a pretty good idea of what the winds would be doing to the seas offshore. Reports from upstate told of blizzard conditions, with six to nine inches of snow, thermometer dropping from a high of 54 degrees to a low of 12 degrees. All night long the bitter high winds had been knocking down signs, toppling chimneys into city streets, breaking store windows, and uprooting trees.

Even worse, those on night duty at Headquarters had seen the first dispatches which told how the storm had upset a party of seventeen sailors, returning to their ship in Newport, Rhode Island; of how fifteen of the sailors had been drowned after their liberty boat capsized. In the morning the wrecked craft was found wedged between rocks on Conanicut Island, about three miles north of Jamestown ferry landing; bodies of several sailors, stiff and lifeless on the shore near by. If such a tragedy could happen in Newport Harbor, how much more probable it was that several Coastal Picket sailing vessels would need assistance.

In the Control Room competent and seasoned officers sat together before an enormous wall chart which gave them a visual representation of the shore and coastal waters from the West Indies to Nova Scotia. On that chart were symbols of all that was happening in the Eastern Sea Frontier: miniature shapes, many of them realistic silhouettes of planes, ships, merchant vessels, men-of-war, patrol craft, submarines. In the widely scattered har-

bors were indications of the Navy and Coast Guard bases which mothered all types of surface craft. Sprinkled along the shore areas of the chart, and at times well inland, were the numerous Army and Navy air hangars and fields. The senior Controller, studying this chart, knew that the commanding officer of each ship and plane was responsible to the commander of his local base; that each of these commanders, in turn, was responsible to the commandant of his naval district or, in the case of the Army, to the separate headquarters under the Army Anti-Submarine Command. But the final integration of all these separate and diverse units rested in the hands of the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier—and his immediate representatives, day and night, were the Controllers who studied the panoramic activity of convoy movements, patrol operations, attacks against submarines, and rescue of survivors. The carefully coached Controllers were obliged to know in advance the intended movements of every plane, every escort, every patrol, every convoy. With this knowledge in mind, they worked out problems of co-ordination and integration. On their mezzanine balcony in the Control Room they were surrounded by a select group of specialists and advisers. With them, at the long desk, sat a liaison officer from the Army Air Force. Spread out before these men was a battery of phones, radios, and two-way speakers. Flanking them in adjoining rooms were all the other necessary means of communication: short-wave radio sets, keys for code telegraphy, teletype machines—with a staff of expert communications officers active day and night. Other offices in this building might close, but vigilance was maintained in this nerve center at all times.

There was frequently a subdued atmosphere of tension in the Control Room. The junior officers reading the latest dispatches might be called at any moment to answer terse questions or to carry out orders. Others moved regularly from the records of ship movements to the chart, in order to correct positions of certain symbols. Muffled telephone bells would be heard ringing, small lights flashing beside different phones on the control desk

to signify incoming reports, requests, warnings, arrivals, departures. Details, details, details. Planes reporting from dawn patrol that a submarine had been attacked, port directors explaining that heavy weather had delayed the departure of convoys outward bound for the United Kingdom, for Africa, for Key West. A ship in distress about ten miles off the mouth of Chesapeake Bay. A blimp unable to take off for intended duty as escort of outgoing merchant vessels. A troop transport safely back again from another successful voyage. Details, and more details.

Into this atmosphere of highly organized activity came the first dispatches, around noon of December 3, stating that several radio stations had intercepted distress signals from the Coast Guard Reserve *3070,* a fifty-seven-foot yawl; position about twenty miles off No Mans Land. With these dispatches came other messages by phone and radio, stating that several bases in the general area were sending lifeboats to assist the yawl, but that seas were running so high that these lifeboats might not be able to make headway.

The yawl was not the only Coastal Picket in distress, and reports of similar problems kept filtering into the Control Room. Air and surface craft of good size would be needed to locate these vessels and guide them safely in. The Surface Controller began lining up a rescue group. Phone calls were made to Army airfields, to Navy airfields, to the section bases nearest the distress area; orders were given.

In spite of bad weather, both Army and Navy planes were wheeled out of their hangars and warmed up. A Coast Guard cutter which had just returned to Newport from a rough patrol off Block Island was ordered to take on water, fuel, and provisions as soon as possible; to put out in search of two Coastal Picket vessels known to be in need of help near Martha's Vineyard.

The first reports from the rescue party were those relayed from plane to shore by the Army bomber, a B-25 which left its base in Massachusetts at 1335 that afternoon. The pilot stated that he

had found *CGR 3070* some thirty-five miles east of the position she had given; that he had exchanged messages in Morse code, by blinker light, and had learned that three men were injured. Having little knowledge of Coastal Picket sailing vessels, the Army pilot did not report that the yawl had lost her jigger, that her life raft was missing from the overhead of the deckhouse, that her sails were badly torn. These details also escaped the notice of the Navy flier in a PBY-5A, when he circled the yawl after dark that night and dropped parachute flares. The Navy pilot did not bring back any message from the yawl, but he was able to report that the crew had fired two green flares and that the vessel was being blown at a good rate of speed farther and farther out to sea. The Coast Guard cutter, informed of these latest details, had her hands full, for she had found another Coastal Picket in distress, had put towlines aboard, and was making her way back through heavy seas to Newport. Two other patrol vessels strong enough to stand the pounding of the gale were soon on their way to *CGR 3070;* one from Newport and another from Boston.

Outside the Control Room the plight of the yawl revived the old arguments between regular officers and reserves. This business of trying to make pretty sailing boats serve as subchasers was silly, one old-tie Captain said. What could you expect but trouble from fair-weather vessels when you put them out to sea in winter storms? Now you could tell what good Hooligan's Navy could be, in time of stress and strain.

A reserve Lieutenant who came in on the conversation was a yachtsman. He hadn't heard about the trouble, and asked an Ensign on watch for the latest dispatches.

"Which Picket boat is sending the distress messages?"

"*CGR 3070.*"

"Who the hell is she?"

"Yawl, fifty-seven feet over-all. *Zaida* before she was converted."

"*Zaida!* Listen, friend, I've sailed her with old man Ratsey.

And believe me, all you have to do is give her a little bit of canvas and she'll come home by herself."

"Well, from all reports, she isn't *headed* home; she's headed for Spain about now, and well on her way—if she's not fifty fathoms under."

"I don't care *where* she is; she'll come home."

9

WE WERE a pretty sorry sight the next morning, December 4. It didn't seem as though the gale had blown itself out, because there were plenty of noises on deck, with tattered canvas slatting. The wind in the shrouds could be heard below whenever gear adrift in the cabin stopped clattering. Nobody tried to stand up. First of all, there wasn't room to walk, what with some of the boards still up, and with four men sleeping on the cabin deck. Smitty and George had decided the table would be more valuable for firewood, and they had split it up into little pieces small enough to fit the potbellied stove. Someone was trying to keep the Shipmate burning, but it gave off more smoke than heat. Nobody was in any mood for breakfast, so there just wasn't any. If anyone felt hungry, he crawled on hands and knees for'ard into the galley and got something to chew on. After a while we began to put the cabin into some kind of order.

We found some funny things. Ward Weimar's bunk was on the portside aft, and underneath it was a kind of bin where we had kept the coal for the stove. When we tried to get out some coal we found a lot of Smitty's letters and stuff underneath the coal. The coal must have slid up the bulkhead when we capsized; then the letters fell off Smitty's shelf over his bunk on the starboard side of the cabin and slid across the deck into the open bin; then the ship righted herself and the coal must have settled back on top of Smitty's stuff. That was the only way we could figure it.

Another thing was funny afterwards. When the floor boards came up, two fifty-pound chunks of lead worked loose and bounced right out into the cabin. We found them inside the

lockers that used to have the leaded glass doors. They took the glass out pretty clean. If one of those chunks had ever hit any of us, it would have done a job. We thought they might have been what broke Watson's ribs, but he said no, it was the stove because he felt it hot on him before it bounced off. Probably that kept the stove from breaking. In the cold days ahead there were times when it seemed we could better afford Watson's broken ribs than a broken stove.

Up on deck that morning we began to figure how we could patch up our sail. The storm trys'l on the main was a hopeless bunch of rags and tatters. But we decided there was no use in trying to break out any new canvas until the wind died down a bit. We didn't have much left, and we couldn't afford to take any chances.

Smitty and George thought it was more important to work on the generator, which was out of order. We had used the batteries so much trying to get off distress messages by radiophone that there wasn't much juice left. The generator wouldn't start because there was too much salt water in the gas, so George and Smitty figured out a way to strain the gas, a little at a time, through a piece of cloth. After a lot of tinkering, they got enough clean gas to start the generator, and the sound of it was sort of cheerful.

We fooled around with the sea anchor quite a bit that morning, trying to slow up our speed. Just before we capsized we had it all rigged and ready to use. But it gave way when we went over, wrapped the line around the stern, and then swung around to the bow. We hauled it in by the trip line, and after we were running under bare poles before the wind we put it out astern. The trouble with that was that it reduced our speed so much that the following seas came over the taffrail into the cockpit. The men on watch would let out a bellow, and we would run up to help bail like fury because water in the cockpit kept running down into the head and into the cabin. Then we'd have to start bailing the bilges out again. I remember Joe Choate lying on his bunk

that morning and giving orders about bailing. We had taken a lot of water in aft, and things looked bad again. Joe was too weak to bail any more himself, so he supervised things in general. Once when a big sea filled the cockpit and sloshed down over the coaming, Joe saw Carlson hanging on down below and looking helpless. Joe let out a bellow:

"Carlson, get off your tail and help bail that cockpit."

Carlson wasn't feeling so good, and he said in a weak voice:

"Joe, I'm forty-one years old, and . . ."

"And you'll never live to be any older," Joe yelled, "if you don't keep bailing."

Carlson bailed.

Not long before noon that day the lookout began shouting and pounding on the companionway hatch. He sounded pretty excited, and most of us except the three invalids piled up the ladder to see what was going on. He kept shouting, "Ship dead astern, ship dead astern." Sure enough, there was something about four miles off. The weather was still squally, and the low clouds cut the visibility so much we couldn't tell what she was. But she kept coming along on a course that would take her by on our portside. We were sure she was a rescue vessel, possibly a PC, then she was too large for that and we decided she was a cutter. As she got closer she looked like a destroyer but somehow wasn't just right. Smitty had been sleeping through all the excitement, but we woke him up and he came up on deck. He took the glasses and squinted for a while, then handed them over to somebody else and started swearing.

"She's a limey destroyer," Smitty said. "She won't stop." Down he went to get some flares. He was still below when the destroyer came alongside, and damned if Smitty wasn't right. We could see men on her deck looking us over, but she went straight past, knifing her way through heavy seas. After she kept right on going, we all began to holler and wave our arms over our heads. Before Smitty brought up the flares she had started to come about. She swung in a wide half-circle, headed up into the wind,

and closed us on our starboard side. When she was near enough, a British voice shouted over and asked what we wanted. The skipper shouted back that we had some injured men aboard, that we had been knocked down by the seas and had lost our storm trys'l. The destroyer plowed upwind quite a way—to think it over, I guess. A snow squall came up, and we lost sight of her. After a while she came back alongside and asked the skipper what he wanted to do. The skipper had been pretty upset by the whole thing, and it was plain that what he wanted most to do was to get the yawl back. He said only one man was badly hurt; that we weren't leaking much, if at all. Then the destroyer payed off again. Some of the fellows had enough and were all for abandoning *Zaida.* Watson was so anxious to get off that he said he'd rather take a chance of jumping overboard and being thrown a line than of staying on the yawl. Joe wanted to stick. He said he thought the destroyer could tow us in. Apparently the destroyer captain decided to take us aboard, because he rigged a crash net on the portside aft and then started edging upwind toward us again. But with the seas pitching both of us around in different directions it was no go. In that sea it would have been the end of the yawl if the destroyer had smacked against her. The net seemed to get fouled in the propeller, and they had quite a job getting it inboard again. After a couple of tries the officer in command on the destroyer said he couldn't take us off, but he'd shoot us a towline.

Under those conditions it's no fun to secure a tow at sea. They shot a line across our bow, and it missed by only a few feet. The next time they tried, something blew up in the gun and the line fouled. The next shot was perfect, and the line fell right across our bow. But before we could haul in the hawser, *Zaida* yawed on the crest of a wave and the line parted over the bowsprit. So they tried another tack. They bent the line on something like a life preserver and floated the life preserver down to us. That would have worked all right if the destroyer could have stayed in one

place. She had to keep some headway to be controllable, and she would keep running past us before we could hook the line and draw it in. After several tries they hauled the life preserver aboard, went ahead of us, and started pumping heavy black bunker oil on the water to see if they could smooth the seas down a bit. We could see the great patch of oil getting closer and closer, but it didn't seem to have much effect. After a while it was all around us, and what a stink it was! Just to add to the fun, the seas kept breaking over the taffrail, and the deck of the yawl was covered with the slimy grease. It sloshed into the cockpit, and we got it all over our cold-weather gear. We began tracking it down into the cabin, and as men got exhausted from slipping around on deck, they went below for rest and stretched out on the mattresses, oil and all. Some of the stuff got into the bilges, and all the rest of the cruise we had that smell of bunker oil to remind us of the limeys. But it worked enough to get the line aboard. After about eight tries they got the line near enough for us to haul it in with the boat hook. Then we kept taking it up until we got the heavy tow hawser, secured it to the mast, ran it for'ard to the chock and over the bow. We waved an OK, and they began taking up the slack slowly.

By that time we were all so wet and cold and tired that we went below. George and Carlson were left on watch. George decided that we wouldn't have a tow very long in that weather unless some sort of chafing gear was rigged to protect it, and he got Carlson to help him. It was pretty ticklish business, and for some reason George crawled out on the bowsprit to secure the chafing gear. He was just about done when a big sea caught him wrong, and he slipped. The force of the sea broke the hold he had with his legs, and he was washed completely over the side. As he lost his balance on the bowsprit, he had kept his feet locked together, and for a split second he swung head downward, reaching for the heavy chain bobstay. Then the water tore him loose and threw him against the bow. Carlson said afterwards that he

had heard about the fear in people's eyes when they are being swept overboard, but the only look on George's face was one of disgust. For a second or two he disappeared completely from sight, and Carlson thought he was a goner. Then the heavy chop lifted him up alongside; practically threw him right back on deck. He grabbed at the wire life line, caught it, and pulled himself aboard. It all happened so fast that good old Carlson didn't even have time to pray. George was all right, but the water was freezing. Carlson told him he'd better go below and get some dry gear. He did. When he came dripping into the cabin the first thing he said was, "Well, boys, *I've* had a bath today, and that's more than any of you bastards can say."

That happened just before dark. The destroyer increased her speed slowly, and in a little while we were slamming through the night at a terrible rate of speed. The seas would spank against the bow with a thud, as though the water was made of cement. The stern would be hauled over the crest and would sit down so hard the thud would jar your teeth. We worried to hear and feel the beating *Zaida* was taking, but she plowed on through everything that came, hour after hour, and nothing happened. On deck it was so dark we could just barely see a blue light on the stern of the destroyer, about a hundred yards off; the rest of her was lost. Someone asked where we were headed, and for the first time we remembered we hadn't asked! Maybe we would wind up in Scotland for our next port of call. At least the worst was over, we said, and the rest didn't matter very much.

But the worst had just begun. About midnight there was a jolt and we began to lose headway. It was as though someone had put on the brakes and we were skidding to a stop. The men on watch went forward and hauled on the towline: it was broken off clean, just forward of the bow. The chafing gear had worn through. We couldn't tell whether the destroyer knew she had lost us, because the blue light on her stern had been hidden at times by low clouds and snow squalls. Of course, there was the chance that she would turn and look for us. We put on our

spreader lights, pretty dim because of the weak batteries, then shot off red flares. We shouted, but there was no use shouting against wind and seas. Nothing came of it.

You could tell by the faces of the crew that everyone was pretty low. There we were, on our own again, perhaps a hundred miles out to sea, with sails in bad shape, one mast gone, water in the gas, salt water in the fresh water, two injured men lashed in their bunks, and that stinking oil all over everything. All night long the wind kept driving us south and east through squall after squall. It was freezing cold, and that solid darkness out there in the middle of nowhere was worse than the cold. If the destroyer circled in that weather, visibility was so bad she might run us down before she saw us. We tried to keep sharp watch, but the snow stung our eyes and half blinded us. We kept hoping for daylight, but it was a long way off.

10

STILL NO WORD from *CGR 3070* had reached Headquarters of the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier on the morning of December 4. Certain officers in the plotting room had been delegated to make a special study of the earlier reports already received; to plot her known positions as given by the planes, and to estimate her probable course made good after taking into consideration all factors of weather, wind, seas, currents. Periodically, estimates were to be sent by radio to the rescue vessels searching for her in the area. A Coast Guard cutter from Newport would soon be converging on her probable position with a gunboat from Boston. Furthermore, arrangements had been made for a Navy plane to cover the area during daylight until the plane sighted the Picket boat and determined her actual position. Then the plane would communicate with the rescue vessels by radio and guide them to the yawl. Other planes on routine anti-submarine patrol in the area were also alerted by radio and given a description of the yawl.

At 1305 that afternoon the Controller was handed a dispatch from the British destroyer *Caldwell*. It read, "Am standing by damaged CG straggler *3070*. Patrol vessel is leaking and has three injured men aboard. Driving snowstorm. Hope take off crew when visibility improves." The Controllers sighed their relief as they handed the dispatch around. The position as given by H.M.S. *Caldwell* was plotted on the special chart. A dispatch was sent to the gunboat, informing her of the new development, and ordering her to proceed to the scene so that the abandoned yawl might be taken in tow and brought back to port. The Coast Guard cutter from Newport was informed that her services

would not be needed, and that she should return to her base.

At 1612 the Controller was given another dispatch from *Caldwell:* "Have taken in tow *CGR 3070*. Proceeding to Halifax owing present weather conditions. Disabled craft has lost sail and believed leaking slightly; auxiliary motor out of order. One injured rating on board." A new turn of events. If the gunboat could alter course enough to intercept the fast-moving destroyer, it would be more sensible to have the gunboat relieve her and tow the yawl into Boston. So the destroyer was asked to give course and speed. Her reply, received at 1959 that evening, stated that her 1900 position was 41–08 North, 66–16 West, course 40°, speed 9.5 knots. She added: "*CGR 3070* in tow, crew on board. Vessel apparently seaworthy. Weather now moderating. Still consider advisable maintain present course."

After further plotting of these two courses, the destroyer and the gunboat were requested to rendezvous at sea the following day, so that *Caldwell* might be relieved of the tow. Messages were sent, acknowledgments received. All seemed to be working out smoothly. Then, shortly before midnight, the discouraging words from *Caldwell:* "Tow parted about 2100, approximate position 41–20 North, 66–00 West. Searching for *CGR 3070*. Request gunboat may join me in search."

The Controllers shook their heads and called for the plotting officers. Get out the chart again and go to work. If *Caldwell* should fail to find *CGR 3070* during the next six hours of darkness, what would be the probable drift of the Picket boat? Draw up search plans for planes and for surface craft, just in case they may be needed. The plotters rounded up officers who had had sailing experience. The Controllers sent another dispatch to *Caldwell* asking for periodic reports on storm conditions, force of seas, wind direction and velocity. The reports continued to come in during the night: heavy westerly sea all day; yawl believed running before the gale under bare poles and towing a sea anchor, possibly making no more than three knots. The gunboat was informed, instructions were given for developing a

careful search. But with wind at force 7, seas running high, clouds low, and snow squalls intermittent, there was good reason to believe that surface vessels were conducting a hopeless needle-in-the-haystack hunt.

During the night plans were made for an extensive hunt by planes as soon as daylight permitted. The Army agreed to have eleven bombers extend their daily sweep for enemy submarines so that they might participate in the search for the yawl; special groups of Navy PBY planes were lined up for search in designated areas; fourteen Canadian planes on routine patrol out of Nova Scotia were also alerted. All surface vessels known to be passing through the search area were asked to keep bright lookouts.

Certainly, something should come of such an extensive coverage. But as the day developed, visibility was poor for both surface and air. Ships and planes made regular reports: yawl not sighted, yawl not sighted, yawl not sighted. At dusk there was nothing new. The day's search had ended in failure.

The same elaborate search was developed throughout the next two days. A large inbound convoy, on the last leg of the tedious voyage from the United Kingdom to New York, seemed to give some promise of being spread over so many miles that she might intercept the haphazard flight of the storm-tossed sailing vessel. By radio, the Controller requested the convoy escorts to search wide on both wings. Nothing.

Vessels covering assigned sectors frequently sighted other ships hull down on the horizon. Hope would grow for a time until a change of course had closed them enough to permit the use of binoculars. Then it would be clear that the searchers had found each other; nothing more.

During the night of December 7 the gunboat was requested to make her own estimate of the yawl's position. Her answer suggested the difficulties involved: "Sea 5, Wind Northwest, force 8. Direction drift Southeast, speed 3 knots. Estimated *CGR 3070* at 2300 Dec. 6: 63–05 West, 41–17 North, based on 3 wind shifts and 1 change speed of drift. Searched yesterday East to 41–20

North, 63–20 West. Some doubts felt her ability to live through the rough seas and heavy squall the last two days, especially if weakened while in tow."

Apparently the gunboat had suffered enough herself, but she was kept searching until her fuel was dangerously low. The next day she reported: "Third day of search since *CGR 3070* broke away from tow. No trace. Considering all factors it is our opinion chances yawl still afloat remote."

Again the plotters were called in by the Controllers at Headquarters for consultation. They studied the chart with the most expert yachtsmen among the officers. Should the search be abandoned? Could a yawl survive under such circumstances? Possibly not all yawls; but *Zaida,* yes.

On December 8, new search areas were plotted, and the hunt continued, with ships and planes combing the storm-tossed surface of the ocean for some signs, if only those left by a derelict: broken spars, driftwood, life preservers, clothing.

11

SEVERAL DAYS LATER the Commanding Officer of the British destroyer submitted a report of the rendezvous with *Zaida:*

"At 1600 on December 3, H.M.S. *Caldwell* slipped from Staten Island Base and proceeded to sea. On clearing harbour, increased speed to 20 knots. After leaving searched channel speed was reduced to 18 knots on account of weather.

"At 1200 on December 4, in position 40° 55′ North, 67° 03′ West, *C.G.R. 3070* was sighted stern on to wind and sea, the crew apparently trying to attract attention by waving their hands. I immediately slowed down and turned to close. Weather conditions: Wind West 6–7, Sea 4–5, Swell 4–6. On closing it was noted that her sails were in tatters and that she had a drogue out aft and was very lively but not shipping any water. Attempts to signal were poor but I got close enough to hail them. They stated that they had three injured men on board and were leaking.

"*C.G.R. 3070* is a 25–30 ton auxiliary yacht, cutter rigged with about a 50 foot mast. She looked in good condition. I proceeded to windward and tried to pump oil down on them preparatory to rescuing them. For one half-hour she was lost in a snow squall; on weather clearing I proceeded to close. The oil was not a success as yacht was moving too quickly.

"On coming up on their quarter I estimated their speed to be 5 knots yawing about 20° each side and making about 3 to 4 knots over ground. I tried to get really close to them and make a lee. But one moment she would bear down on my ship nearly bows on and the next she would shoot off again. As she appeared to

be rather a sturdy craft and had this long substantial mast, I decided she would probably seriously damage me. My ship was handling very badly as well. I managed to get heaving lines on board three times with aid of Coston Gun but they all carried away before heavier lines could be passed. Next we tried floating a heavy line on a flotta net down to them, but they could not get it and eventually I fouled line and net with my port propeller and ended that.

"I managed to get a semaphore from them that only one man was injured and no mention of a leak, only worried about being driven out to sea. About 1500, Wind, Sea, and Swell commenced to moderate. I managed to get ahead of them and both ships managed to keep in line. I pumped more oil overboard and yacht managed to keep in my wake. A line was again passed but carried away before towing hawser could be passed. A second attempt was successful and towing hawser passed. At 1600, yacht had secured hawser and with about a 200 fathom tow I brought wind and sea on port quarter and commenced towing at 9 knots in direction of Halifax. I had to give up pumping oil on water owing to it getting into condensers.

"During the two and one half hours of daylight left, the tow behaved admirably and with weather conditions still moderating slowly, things looked bright. After dark, the tow showed a torchlight periodically and with the aid of the two lookouts aft I could get reports of tow. At 2100, my Gunner went aft and sighted tow, saw that lookouts had her in view. At 2130, the Petty Officer of the watch reported that torchlight was seen again for a few moments. Just about 2200, it became very dark and lookouts reported that they had lost sight of tow. The Officer of Watch went aft and stated that he could see nothing; but that towline still appeared to be taking a strain. The searchlight was switched on and no tow could be seen. I immediately hove to and got towline in. No light or flares were seen from yacht. When end of tow rope was hauled in it had the appearance of having been cut by a knife or axe, as it was cleanly cut off.

"The visibility remained poor and weather deteriorated from midnight. Search was carried out at slow speed till daylight without result. It was presumed that when she was adrift she would carry on running before the wind and search was made accordingly. Commander Eastern Sea Frontier was asked for aerial assistance, which he stated was on its way, but was never sighted.

"At 1300 on December 5, a United States destroyer was met, and information passed to her. The weather throughout the day remained Wind Westerly, 6–7, Sea and Swell 4–6 and 5–6.

"At 0600 on December 6, search was abandoned, and *Caldwell* was ordered to Halifax. At 0800, a United States gunboat was met and all information passed to her. At 1000 a Canadian Catalina was sighted and information passed to her.

"*C.G.R. 3070*, except for loss of sails, looked very seaworthy. The whole time I was in company, she rode the seas perfectly and answered her helm as well as could be expected. Never shipped any water and very little spray. The crew were able to move about upper deck throughout. She appeared to be very badly off for signalling and distress equipment. Owing to her speed through water and state of sea, I could not take off crew at beginning; after getting her in tow and seeing her behaviour it was then not considered necessary.

"Why a cutter-rigged yacht should be outside of enclosed waters in winter time I do not know."

12

THE MORNING AFTER we lost sight of the limey destroyer we gave up thinking about being rescued and decided that our fate was in our own hands. During the night things had seemed bad, because the steady pounding of the seas threatened to make kindling wood out of *Zaida.* When we came off watch we would be so wet and cold and miserable that everything seemed hopeless. The fire in the potbellied stove would go out unless someone kept fussing with it all the time, and nobody had enough energy to bother with it for more than a little while. So we would grope around until we found a place to lie down, then drag something over us and go to sleep. I can remember lying on the cabin deck, after coming off watch that night, shivering so hard I couldn't keep my teeth from rattling. I thought sure I'd wake up with pneumonia or worse. But when I came to I was fairly dry except for my boots. I had slopped some water into them on deck, and hadn't bothered to pull them off when I came off watch. So the water was still there, and my feet were cold. I pulled off my boots and rubbed my feet until they were dry, then tried to find some dry socks. But all our clothes were more or less wet. It was just a matter of finding which things had the least water in them.

When I had pulled myself together I went up on deck to see how things were going. George and Carlson were up there, trying to patch holes in the cabin overhead. When we had knocked, the deck had been swept clear of anything that would give. The metal ventilators, with their open cowls, had been weak as cardboard against that surge of water, and they had been carried overboard, leaving holes through which water poured down into

the cabin. The holes had been stuffed up for a while, but George and Carlson were flattening out tin cans and were nailing them over the openings.

The next problem was to check over shrouds and rigging to see how much damage had escaped our notice. The spreaders on the mainmast had been weakened, possibly by being hit hard by the life raft when the mast lay over in the trough. George said there would be no use trying to sail on a port tack until we had strengthened the port shrouds, otherwise we might have the mainmast carry away in a blow. So we tightened the shrouds as best we could. *Zaida* was pretty lively. She still pitched and rolled so hard that we couldn't really do much, because we had to keep one hand wrapped around something for support. Most of the day we just puttered with little things.

The real headache was canvas. The storm trys'l had flapped around in the wind until it was nothing but rags. With the mizzen gone too, that left only our forestays'l and jib. Joe Choate, still too weak to come up on deck for more than a few minutes at a time, thought we could take the jib off and rig it to the mainmast like a storm trys'l. When George crawled out on the bowsprit and unfastened the jib we found it had been chafed or torn, possibly from contact with the hawser while we were under tow. So there was no use putting it up until we had done some patching. We wrapped it in a clumsy ball and stuffed it down the companionway, to work on it in the cabin.

Windsor proved to be the best man we had for patching sail. At some time or other he had worked as a sailmaker, although he hadn't said anything about it before. It was too dark in the cabin to work without light, and the batteries were too weak to keep using the power that way. On the cabin bulkhead, just over the little fireplace, there was a kerosene lamp swung in gimbals so that it would keep a horizontal position at all times. We had grown to hate that lamp, because it kind of hypnotized us when *Zaida* began to roll. You could always tell how much she was rolling just by watching that lamp; then when you tried to for-

get, there was the lamp, swaying back and forth, back and forth like a drunk standing still. Smitty had wanted to break the damn thing and get rid of it. But now it came in handy. When we ran out of kerosene, Smitty mixed some gasoline with lubricating oil and made something that worked pretty well as a substitute. Then we got Windsor squared away with his sail twine, beeswax, patching canvas, needles, and sailmaker's palm. He seemed to be happy to have something really important to do, and other fellows volunteered to take his watch so he could keep on patching. Once in a while he would get up long enough to find a little something to eat in the galley; then he'd smell the air on deck for a few minutes and go back to his knitting.

The worst part of this jib-conversion job was that our Marconi rig mainmast had a sail track for those metal slides sewn to the luff of the mains'l or trys'l. Of course the jib didn't have any slides, so we had to cut them from what was left of the trys'l luff. Windsor had the extra job of sewing each one of those slides at regular intervals along the edge of the jib so that it could be fitted to the sail track on the main. It was slow work, and some of us helped him. But after a little, we would have to quit and go up topside for our trick at the wheel. With Jim Watson strapped up in splints and lashed in his bunk with broken ribs, and Joe Choate with a cruddy face and Smitty not too chipper with his black eye and swollen nose, there were only six men left to stand watch. The Chief had begun to take his turn as soon as we were crippled. We tried all kinds of watches. Nobody had strength to stand four-hour watches, after what we'd been through. First we tried standing two hours on, and four off. Next, somebody suggested standing one hour on, and two off. That was the way it went most of the time. It was kind of tough on sleep, and when things moderated a little we tried having only one man on deck during a watch, with another man standing by below so he could be called at short notice if needed. That night, I remember that Windsor was sewing away on the slides each time I went up on deck for my watches, and was still sewing each time I came off.

Just after daylight I was called again, woke up, and found Windsor still sewing—he had kept at it straight through the night, and he was almost finished.

The day before—that is, December 6—we had run out of the worst of the first storm. There were several others ahead for us, but fortunately we didn't know that. Jobbie and Smitty had gotten up enough courage to hoist the forestays'l on the afternoon of the sixth, and had been able to make a reach on the starboard tack, on a south-southwesterly course. That gave us a little more courage, because the sail helped steady the yawl and things were a bit more comfortable below. We kept sailing most of that night, even though the wind began to freshen after midnight. Funny how that watch from midnight to four always seems to be the weather watch. During those hours the sky gets around to deciding what it will dish out for the next day. So that night, as the hours passed, we could tell that we were in for another blow —or more of the same. All through the next morning the wind built up seas until we had to haul down the forestays'l and run under bare poles again. The worst of it was that we lost all we had made the day before, because the wind blew us south and east again, until after dark on December 7. But during that night the weather moderated again, we hoisted the forestays'l, and set our course toward land.

We kept wondering just where we were. The standard log, which usually lay on the chart shelf at the foot of the companionway, had been washed down into the bilge when we capsized. Somebody dragged it out and dried it off, but the pages stuck together and it wasn't any good. From then on, the skipper did all his figuring and reckoning in a little notebook of his own, and kept it in his pocket. Joe Choate started to keep a log of his own. Because he was too weak to do anything, and because his wrist watch was the only timepiece still running, he became the official duty officer who would call men for their trick at the wheel, send them up to relieve those topsides, then ask them for course and

speed when they came off watch. Somebody was always getting impatient and shouting down the companionway hatch:

"Joe, what time is it?"

One of the coldest nights, George said he would stand the first hour alone, then call Smitty to stand the next hour. George was pretty patient about things, and just fought the wheel for a long time. He said afterwards he thought he had been on deck for at least two hours before he shouted down:

"Joe, what time is it?"

(Joe says his idea of hell is a place where he is never allowed to sleep more than five minutes without having someone wake him to ask him the time.) He woke up, looked at the luminous hands on his dial, and shouted back:

"You've got a half an hour yet."

George didn't say anything for a while. The more he thought about it, the more he thought Joe had been sleeping too well. So he lashed the wheel and came down to take a look for himself. Joe was sleeping on one arm, and his wrist stuck out over the side of his sack very obligingly. George stooped down and studied the luminous dial for a while, then began to swear. He had stood a two-hour watch: his own hour, and Smitty's! He went over and looked at the skipper, snoring. Then he shook Smitty awake and told him what had happened.

"Wake the skipper," George said, "and tell him it's his watch."

That was correct. Smitty grinned, got up, put on his heavy-weather jacket, walked over, and shook the skipper by the shoulders. When the skipper had his eyes open, Smitty said:

"Your watch."

Five minutes later Smitty was back in his sack again, sound asleep.

13

THE INCIDENT of the mysterious marine radiophone message caused considerable excitement in the Headquarters of the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier.

During the evening of December 8 an entry was made in the Frontier log as follows: "Continuous and concentrated search by Army, Navy, and Canadian planes and by surface craft was conducted despite adverse weather conditions. Search unavailing to the present time." That night, the gunboat was assisted by three destroyers who were passing through the area on a separate assignment. But the watch changed at midnight in the Control Room without any further reports from the searchers.

At about 0630 on December 9 the Controller received a phone call from a Coast Guard radio station on Long Island, saying that a fairly strong message had been received on standard Coastal Picket frequency, stating that *CGR 3070* was calling its own station; that she had an "urgent message." Unfortunately, the message itself was garbled by interference and could not be logged. A few minutes later a dispatch from the Coast Guard radio station on Block Island reported that it had received the entire message from *CGR 3070;* that it was: "Condition favorable. Three men injured." The station at Block Island had repeated the message and had received in reply the words, "Message correct."

The Controller called in the plotting officers to ask their advice. What did they make of this message? Some were skeptical. It sounded like a hoax. Why should two small stations intercept such a message from a vessel well offshore when more powerful stations monitoring the same frequency had not heard any mes-

sage? The officers produced the chart on which the probable course of the *Zaida* had been plotted. They measured distances from the assumed position to shore. If the yawl were in the area where the search had been conducted—some hundred miles east of George's Bank—then her radio message should have been more clearly heard by one of the larger stations on Cape Cod, or at Boston.

The officers who took pride in their blue-water sailing days were quick to advance their own opinions. Everyone had taken it for granted that the vessel had been running before the wind all the time. But unless the storm had been incredibly severe there was every reason to believe that the yawl had started beating back toward her base under mizzen and heads'l. (Nobody had reported that *Zaida* had lost her jigger; merely that her sails were in bad shape.) Chances were that she might have gotten off a weak message and that it had been just strong enough to reach the nearest stations—one on Block Island, one on Long Island. Considering her last known position, as reported by H.M.S. *Caldwell,* and other variable factors after that report was received, she might have been beating back toward home for the past three days; might even now be in the vicinity of Nantucket Lightship.

Such a supposition might seem a bit fantastic; yet how else could one explain the mystery of the radio message? Other search areas had been combed by ships and aircraft, day and night; there could be no harm in trying to locate the lost yawl nearer her base. The Controller organized a new search. Airfields were requested to alert planes returning through the Nantucket area from their dawn patrols. The Coast Guard was requested to inform its Coastal Pickets in the area, so that they might try to contact their sister ship and give her assistance. A sturdy seagoing tug at New London was ordered out to conduct an extensive search in co-ordination with Army and Navy aircraft, which would also cover the same sector.

Obviously, the immediate problem was to be certain that the injured men aboard *CGR 3070* were brought in for medical care

as soon as they could be found. But how could the meaning of that strange message be explained? The vessel had already been out ten days. If food and water were running low, it hardly seemed probable that any message would be received stating that conditions were satisfactory. Nevertheless, the Controller decided to prepare for any eventuality. He phoned Lakehurst and advised the Naval Air Station to have an airship stand by with first-aid kits and packets of food and water, which might be lowered on a line or dropped by parachute. Once the yawl had been located by the faster planes, the airship could proceed to the spot in short order.

But if the yawl had her radio in working condition, even in weakened condition, there was still another method of locating her. While she used her radio, she could be located by radio direction finders. If three separate stations could report a bearing, these bearings could be plotted on a chart—and where the three lines intersected, the yawl's position would be indicated. Further consultations with the Coast Guard Headquarters in the Third Naval District; plans for choosing the best time for a concentrated attempt to have all radio stations in the area work on the problem. The district Coast Guard Officer took charge of the plan and organized all local stations accordingly. The yawl would be told to charge her batteries in preparation for a continued transmission at 2000 that night; all stations in the area would keep silence and monitor the frequency, while radio direction finders took bearings on her.

At 2000 all stations which might normally use the Coastal Picket frequency were silent, from Massachusetts to Virginia. Nobody had thought of interference from stations as far away as Alabama. But the radio operators who tried to pick up even the faintest word from *CGR 3070* were thwarted by the steady monotone of voices going conscientiously about their business in Mobile.

That was not the end. The same procedure was tried again on the night of December 10. Stations as far south as Norfolk were

directed to broadcast to the *CGR 3070* the following message: "All stations East Coast will keep silent and listen for you to make a report at 2200 to 2215 tonight." All stations *did* keep their silence this time. All listened.

There was nothing but silence.

14

WE HAD TRIED to use the marine radiophone on *Zaida* as soon as we had bailed enough water out to know she was going to stay afloat. But the aerial had been rigged between the mizzen and the mainmast, and when the mizzen carried away the aerial broke. By the time we had fixed some sort of jury rig for the aerial, we found that the batteries were so weak we could just barely hear the shore stations on our frequency. George and Smitty were the best mechanics aboard, and their work on the generator had taken quite a little time. First they had lifted it out of the engine-room hold underneath the cockpit, then they had carried it below to work on it. They swore that when they had the generator working again they were going to take the head off the auxiliary engine and do a job on that. The skipper said he'd settle for the generator just then because he was anxious to get the radiophone working. Before they were done with the overhaul and had tried to use the watered gas, someone else had checked the radiophone and had found water in it. Not surprising, since it had been buried under water for a time. Smitty and George finally began to get some power back into the batteries. At first the generator choked and backfired, then it began running by fits and starts. As it got warmed up, it would race along on good gas for a minute or so, then cough and slow down. Smitty would dive for the adjuster, monkey with it until the motor picked up again, then cock his head on one side and worry over it like a doctor looking at a very sick patient.

If only the batteries hadn't been under water during the capsizing, they might have been charged in a short time. As it was, they slowly got stronger and stronger. After a while we could turn

the radio on long enough to hear our shore station calling other Picket boats. That cheered us up.

About daylight on December 9, George and Smitty announced that they had enough power in the damn batteries to send a message, but they couldn't promise that the juice would last very long. So the skipper picked up the phone and started talking. He had done it so many times before, when the phone was dead, that nobody paid much attention to him. We almost fell over when we heard the Block Island station answering the skipper. It caught him by surprise, too. He had said that we had an urgent message, and when he was told to go ahead with his message, he couldn't seem to think what to say! Finally he came through with five words:

"Condition favorable, three men injured."

The Block Island operator repeated the message, and the skipper acknowledged:

"Message correct."

I'll never forget Smitty's face. He was so disgusted, he couldn't even swear. But after the skipper had gone up on deck Smitty started churning around in the cabin, kicking things and saying over and over:

"That —— man, that —— man."

I don't know what he expected the skipper to say. We couldn't very well give our position, because we didn't really know. But both the skipper and Choate had kept their own dead-reckoning positions, and they were based on having been blown south and east, having sailed southwest for a day, then of having been blown south and east again. That did come out to some kind of position. True, there hadn't been any chance for using the sextant, and if there had been there wasn't any chronometer working. The clock on the companionway bulkhead came up out of the capsizing bath with a little puddle behind the glass, and it had stopped. As for wrist watches, nobody had any faith in Joe's, although we later checked it by the radio broadcasts of time and found that it was correct almost to the second. As for the radio

direction finder, that had never survived banging around the cabin after Watson dropped it—or after it dropped Watson.

During the rest of the morning the skipper turned on the radio each hour at the scheduled time. I think it was about the noon radio watch when he heard our own shore station calling *CGR 3070*. The skipper tried to reply and was given a message to the effect that we should charge our batteries without using the radio again until 2000 that night, when we would be expected to report our position. Other stations would be listening for us. The skipper tried to acknowledge but couldn't tell whether or not his "Roger" got through.

We were all pretty excited over that message, because it was the first time we had been in contact with a living soul for what seemed like a month of Sundays. Smitty and George went back to the generator and started it up again. The rest of us began straining enough gas to have a supply in store. The afternoon dragged on, and all we could do was wait. Not that we forgot to sail. The storms seemed to keep coming in twenty-four-hour cycles, but during the afternoon we had courage enough to use the forestays'l again, so we were beating back toward shore. We figured that we must be somewhere on a latitude with Atlantic City, but probably four hundred miles east. On our course made good, we were probably making two or three knots southwest—which meant that we might hope to make a landfall on Palm Beach, Florida, sometime early in January! But we didn't worry about that. We just kept talking about what might come of our little radio program that evening.

As the hour came close, we all got more and more keyed up. Smitty kept testing the batteries, and the skipper kept checking the radiophone to be sure everything was all right. The rest of us did our best to crowd around the companionway so we could hear whatever came over the air. Finally Joe gave the word that his watch said 2000, and the skipper turned on the radio. We could hear our station calling *CGR 3070;* then the skipper began to talk. He gave our dead-reckoning position, course, and

speed, then said conditions were fairly good. When he switched over to receive, all we could hear was a voice droning away on our frequency. Whatever he was saying, it had nothing to do with us. We tried again and again, but never got any answer. All the time, the strength of our radio kept growing weaker and weaker. Smitty said it was the salt water in the cells and it wouldn't do any good to keep charging the batteries, because they wouldn't build up strength. He tried charging again, but no luck. That was just about the end of our radio. We could never send or receive on it after that night.

15

WE THOUGHT *Zaida* had taken about the worst that the ocean and winter weather could dish out, during those days just after she capsized; but we knew better before we were through. The day after the radiophone incident the sea moderated so much that we decided the time had come to try out the jib as a storm trys'l on the mainmast. It made quite a little ceremony. Even Joe Choate, with his busted head, crawled out of his sack and went up on deck to watch us rig it. The worst trouble was that when the original trys'l had given way, the shackle on the main halyard had torn out and was hauled aloft to the top of the mast. The only way to get it down, so it could be used for hauling up the new trys'l, was to have someone go aloft in a bosun's chair rigged on the jib halyard. By the time we were all assembled, the skipper had rigged the bosun's chair. He looked around, turned to George, and told him to climb aboard. George was holding onto the portside shrouds, and he didn't move. He just looked at the skipper, then looked aloft at the top of the mast, swaying like an inverted pendulum as the big rollers made *Zaida* rise, yaw, and fall off. George and the skipper had gotten along pretty well until then, although there had been a couple of private conversations in which they had disagreed over points of marlinespike seamanship. This time, when the skipper ordered him aloft, George just stared up the mast a few seconds and then said very quietly, "It can't be done." The skipper had a hot temper and flew off the handle. He kept blustering until George said, "I'll go up the shrouds, but if anyone tries to go up in the chair he'll come down with a broken neck."

The skipper said he didn't care how it was done; he had to

have that halyard. George took off his gloves, his heavy-weather jacket, his boots, and one pair of socks. Then he took hold of the port shrouds and started up. We had seen him do it so many times that there wasn't anything unusual about it, except that he seemed to be going much slower than usual. When he got up to the spreaders he stopped. For a few seconds he hung there, breathing hard and rolling from side to side with the ship's motion. Then he eased himself down the shrouds, hand over hand, until he stood on the deck. All he said was:

"Too weak."

That was the first time most of us had thought about it. We had started by being seasick, then we had been banged about, then we had gone without sleep, or without more than an hour or two of sleep between watches, then we had been getting meals whenever we could, while fooling around in the galley. There had been no regular hours for "chow down" since the blow. The skipper looked at George with disgust, then said, "All right, if you won't go up, I will. Take the halyard." George stepped over and took the halyard, and Jobbie reached over to give him a hand. The skipper climbed into the chair, looked aloft, and said:

"Heave away."

George smiled a little, and heaved. After a few heaves, the skipper shouted:

"Hold it."

Only about fifteen feet up, and with about fifty-five feet to go, he was having trouble that gave him more respect for George. All the skipper said was:

"Let me down."

George didn't smile; just let him down and secured the halyard around a cleat. The skipper didn't say anything. The upshot of the incident was that we had to make a jury rig by backing the jib halyard around the shroud and into the head of the converted storm trys'l. Old Windsor's job of sewing on the slides for the sail track really looked like a professional piece of work—and as we came up into the wind and hauled up the

trys'l, the patches were so neat that they seemed almost ornamental. We all kept patting Windsor on the back and telling him we thought he'd done a wonderful job. He had.

Just as we finished and were ready to settle down on a southwesterly course, someone shouted:

"Squall on the starboard beam."

Squall, hell! It was practically a hurricane. At first all we could see was a smoky bank of cloud that rose several hundred feet from the ocean. Under it the water had a dark and ominous color, flecked with whitecaps. When we first saw it, it couldn't have been more than four miles away, and rolling down on us fast from the northwest. As we all stood there, staring, we could hear something that sounded like the roar of breakers on the shore. Joe Choate was the first one to say anything:

"That's a damn sight more than a squall. Down sail and make everything secure before she hits." The man at the wheel brought the ship's head up into the wind, and we dropped our new trys'l in a hurry. Hands and arms around the boom, tying the furled sail fast; plenty of stops. Down came the forestays'l with a clatter and swish; more furling, more stops. Sheets taken up, all extra lines stowed through the fo'castle hatch, all hatches battened down, all snugged down below. Before we had finished we could hear the wind louder, could feel the rain blown ahead like a heavy mist. Then the shrouds began to sing. The two men on watch were struggling into boots and adding oilskins over their heavy-weather gear. They both broke out the familiar life lines, snapped them around their bodies, and bent the free ends around the stanchion in the cockpit. The rest of us climbed down into the companionway. The last look I got, the sky to le'ward was a dirty yellow; the storm area was coppery along the edges and black underneath. To the north, the black was toned down by a solid gray of falling rain. *Zaida* was already feeling the wind. The halyards flapped and cracked against the mainmast, the shrouds vibrated in the wind. The ocean was kicking up a dirty chop. I

had seen enough. I pulled the hatch into place and groped down the companionway.

Everyone in the cabin was trying to secure gear already starting to go adrift. In the galley, pans and kettles that had been fairly quiet for the last few days began to clank and clatter against each other in their racks. Then the storm hit with full force. *Zaida* pitched and rolled in a way that can't be described. Some of us lay down on mattresses that had been pulled on the deck, others sat with backs wedged against cabin bulkheads. Watson was the only one still in his bunk, and he wouldn't have been there long without the sail stops that lashed him secure as we could make him.

All that night the gale and seas kicked us around. From the way *Zaida* pitched and rolled, everyone knew that this was worse than what we had already gone through. We worried about the men on watch. We worried for fear the mainmast would snap off and go overboard. But there was nothing we could do. The only hope was that the shrouds could hold against the terrible force screaming through them. We could hear the chop slap against the stern, the splash of water spilling forward along the deck as the larger seas came over the taffrail. Nobody said much. We just lay there dreading the thought of having to take our turn on watch.

It was decided that two men would stand an hour watch together that night, and even that seemed too long. The wind steadily built up to a gale that seemed powerful enough to tear *Zaida* to pieces. But *Zaida* took it all and ran bravely before the gale. We could tell from the sound of water along the hull that she was really racing along at the same speed she would have made with balloon sails on forestay and jib stay, in good racing weather. If only she had been headed the right way, we might have felt better; but we were adding one more leg to our zigzag cruise—and this leg was carrying us farther and farther out to sea, south and east.

All that night and all the next morning the storm continued.

At times the rain hammered away on the cabin overhead by the bucketful. Again the rain would stop entirely, and only the irregular swish of wind-driven spray drummed on the hatches overhead. By noon we began to tell each other the gale had lessened a bit, but if it had the seas kept running in great forty-foot rollers. At one minute *Zaida* would be down in a trough, then she would be picked up into the air by her taffrail until she seemed to be hanging off a clothesline; for a second she would steady on the crest before the roller slid from under and left her briefly with her bowsprit pointing up into the scud.

About 1600 that afternoon the lookouts started shouting. We couldn't understand the words below decks, but their excitement carried to us before someone slid back the companionway hatch far enough to hear:

"Ship broad on the port bow!"

The skipper piled out over the coaming in short order, with several of us on his heels. Sure enough, some kind of man-o'-war that looked like a corvette, less than a mile away, and heading for us. As she came close, she started circling us, and we all began waving our arms over our heads and shouting. Rescue, and just in the nick of time! As she was completing her circle someone shouted:

"There's another ship, starboard beam."

What a sight! It was a new destroyer, one of our own, bearing down on us under plenty of steam. Every time she dipped, her bow buried itself in the sea and took tons of water over the for'ard deck. Then the bow rose slowly and shook the water off in great masses of white foam. At about the same time we saw a long line of freighters and tankers off the port bow—ten or fifteen of them, plowing along less than three miles away. It was a convoy, and the destroyer and the corvette were a part of its escort group. Good enough! Join the Navy and see the world! If we were taken aboard the outbound destroyer, we might see quite a piece of the world before we got back to port! We all started shouting and laughing above the noise of the storm.

16

THE CONVOY was outward bound from New York for North Africa: many ships heavily loaded with precious supplies, fuel, ammunition, food, equipment, and soldiers—all urgently needed for the momentous campaign which had begun on the shores of the Mediterranean a little more than a month earlier. Every ship in that convoy represented an accumulation of material which had been in the process of preparation, through slow stages, for weeks and months. Only two other convoys of equal size had preceeded this one to North Africa from this country; many more of even greater size would be needed to keep the enterprise adequately supplied. Yet this impressive convoy, plowing through the dangerous submarine-infested waters of the Atlantic, was a symbol of an even larger enterprise: the still-ineffectual struggle of all the Allied nations against the military might of an enemy which had already overrun most of Europe with brutally victorious armies.

Up until the sailing hour the endless details of preparation had been the familiar burden of the Port Director in New York and of the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier. Each Master of each merchant vessel had been given his specific orders as to the position of his ship in the pattern of the convoy; as to course, speed, signals, flags. Each merchant vessel had been carefully loaded and inspected to make certain that winter seas would not shift cargo around in such a way as to cause trouble. Then had come the intricate problem of herding the ships down the bay to Ambrose, of getting each one out the gate with proper clearance, of keeping them in single file through the channel which had been carefully explored by mine sweepers. Once out to sea, the destroy-

ers and corvettes began the laborious task of playing sheep dogs, herding the vessels into their proper positions until the convoy formation had been completed.

Now the responsibility rested primarily with the one man who had been designated as flag officer for the escorts: the Escort Commander. From the bridge of his own destroyer the Escort Commander kept in constant touch with captains of the other escorts, all assigned to wing positions far out on the flanks of the convoy. Submarines had been known to sneak up into the approaches to New York Harbor, and if any of them were in the vicinity they would find the convoy most vulnerable before the procession had settled down to the long and steady march across hundreds of ocean miles to Africa.

This particular convoy had to worry more about winter seas and weather than submarines. A heavy storm from the northwest had been predicted before the ships left port at dawn; before the end of the first day the storm had swept in with violent winds that kicked up chop enough to reduce the speed of the convoy. Heavily loaded tankers and freighters labored clumsily through seas that grew worse during the first night. When daylight gave the Escort Commander a chance to count noses, he found he had lost several ships which had dropped behind. Then started the search and the roundup. By noon the flock had been herded back into formation, and the worried Escort Commander could start wondering how many might straggle during the low visibility of the coming night.

Into the midst of all his routine worries came an unexpected bit of information. The escort on the portside of the convoy, forward, reported that her lookouts had spotted something that looked like a submarine, abaft the port beam and very low on the horizon. The escort was turning back to investigate. That should make the object appear somewhere off the port bow of the flag destroyer. The Captain gave orders to change course and increase speed, then pulled on his helmet and climbed out on the bridge wing. Before long the lookouts reported that they could

see the other escort. Then they sang out again: "Something low in the water, sir, two points off the port bow." Battle stations were sounded. Men began running to their stations all along the decks of the destroyers. Guns were uncovered, breech-locks tested, muzzles trained in the direction of the indistinguishable object that appeared and disappeared with rising and falling rollers under it.

Another message from the first escort: non-sub. It looked like a sloop running before the wind under bare poles. On the destroyer bridge, glasses were trained until the sloop was plainly discernible. Secure battle stations. The first escort was ordered back to the convoy; the Escort Commander would handle this one. After a little the destroyer closed until the pitching bow of the stranger revealed a white series of numbers and letters against her gray paint. Through the binoculars he read them: *"CGR 3070."* A Coastal Picket, three hundred miles offshore, and in weather like this! Bleeding angels of mercy!

The Captain called one of the signalmen and told him to get on the blinker. Ask the sloop if she needs assistance. The signalman snapped the switch below the twelve-inch searchlight, reached for the lever, and started a rhythmical clattering of the shutters. He stopped and waited; then the rhythmical clatter started again. It seemed pretty obvious that the answer would be the one letter meaning "Yes." It was. The destroyer had slowed down as it started circling through seas so high that the sloop disappeared at times in deep troughs until only her spindling mast showed over the spray-crested rollers.

The Captain told the signalman to ask if the skipper wanted to be taken aboard. Again the shutters broke the searchlight cone into a series of longs and shorts; again the feeble light from the sloop, and the same letter: "Yes." The destroyer changed her course and closed the sloop. Nets were made ready aft on the well deck. But before many minutes everyone knew there wasn't a chance in hell of taking anyone aboard, with those crazy waves tossing the sloop around like a cork.

All this time the sailing vessel had been making so much headway before the wind that she was closing the freighters in the port column of the convoy. It seemed fantastic to see the wind driving her, without power or sail, faster than the speed of the freighters. The Captain brought the destroyer around until he was following the cork-and-toothpick on a stern chase. Then he tagged along for the next half-hour, as the little craft began her unbelievable journey diagonally through the pattern of the convoy. Men lined the rails of the merchant vessels to wave and shout in wonder at this bold visitor. The men on the sailing vessel waved back. Some of the freighters found themselves on a collision course with the sailing vessel, and she was given respectful deference. Under any other circumstances it would have been a ludicrous performance, a saucy bit of impudence on the part of the sloop. Under these circumstances, with the wind whipping the poor creature along under cruel conditions, everyone seemed to realize that the little vessel was not doing anything of her own choosing; that she was powerless to keep out of the convoy path; powerless to keep from moving faster than the sluggish behemoths that fell off to port and starboard to give her right of way. And in her wake, like a self-conscious sheep dog chasing a rabbit through the flock, the destroyer followed.

During the outlandish performance several messages were interchanged between the bridge of the destroyer and the cockpit of the sloop. The destroyer blinked the disturbing message that she could not take the crew aboard because seas were running too high. The sloop blinked a question, "What is our position?" and the answer was given in exact degrees and minutes. Then the destroyer asked how the fugitives were fixed for food and water. Again a single word in answer, "Low." Well, the least the destroyer could do was to rig a drum half full of water and a watertight can full of provisions. The signalman was told to send another message to the effect that the two drums would be lowered over the side on a rope, the rope paid out to stern on the course of the sloop until it was alongside. Then the destroyer

moved out ahead, took up a position forward of the sloop, and lowered the two drums. The dark objects bobbed around on the crests of several rollers, then were lost to sight in the trough, rose, and disappeared. The afternoon was already late, and visibility was growing poorer and poorer. The sailing vessel, like the drums, would rise and disappear, rise and disappear with each succeeding roller. Whether or not she would be able to change her course, the destroyer could not tell. And in the haze it was difficult to know when the drums were alongside. After a sufficient length of time the destroyer circled back and the line was hauled in. The two drums were still on the line, and they were lifted back aboard.

It seemed too bad to leave the sloop in distress like that. Unfortunately, the destroyer had its primary obligation to the dozens of ships that were already well off to port. There was no need to explain that by blinker; nothing more that could be said except a parting "Good luck." So the destroyer increased her speed, plowed back toward the convoy, and left the sloop to her fate.

Convoy regulations required that the Escort Commander should not break radio silence until he had completed a designated leg of the cruise. More than twenty-four hours after the incident the Escort Commander sent his wireless message back across hundreds of miles of winter ocean to the United States. In accordance with directives, he gave all routine details, including reports on nine merchant vessels which had straggled and had been rounded up again during the storm. At the end of his message he added the one unusual occurrence:

"*CGR 3070,* Latitude 37–40, Longitude 69–50 at 1800, December 13. Seaworthy but in need of assistance not rendered due weather, darkness, and necessity other employment of escorts."

17

WE WERE ALL SURE that we would be rescued when we first saw the corvette, the destroyer, and the long procession of merchant vessels along the horizon. Nobody thought anything about how we would be taken off *Zaida.* Even when the destroyer kept bucking those forty-foot seas as she started swinging around us, she looked so large and powerful that we felt she could do anything. We might have remembered how the limey destroyer had nearly scared us to death when she bore down on us with the nets over the side. But that seemed ages ago, and now we were ready to take all kinds of chances to end the long punishment.

While we were still telling each other that we were off for North Africa as crew aboard a walloping big destroyer, we saw the bright searchlight on the destroyer bridge blinking at us. The skipper stood up and shouted:

"Get the Aldis lamp."

We had rigged the lamp to a thirty-two-volt battery that Smitty had salvaged from our wrecked lighting system, and we had kept the battery charged with the others by means of the generator. The lamp looked like a heavy revolver with a great bulb-shaped reflector and lens at the end of the barrel. The skipper took it and started to signal; but the chop and rollers kept rising so high between *Zaida* and the destroyer that we couldn't even see her bridge at times. We kept asking the skipper what the destroyer had said, and finally he told us she wanted to know if we needed assistance. We let out whoops and bellows, all the while slapping each other on the shoulders and chattering like a bunch of wild Indians. The skipper said he wanted to get as

much height as he could, and asked Jobbie to hold him against the boom of the mainmast after he had climbed up on the cabin overhead. Jobbie crawled up after him, lay down spread-eagle on the overhead, and wrapped his arms around the skipper's feet. The skipper draped his waist and chest over the boom so he could use both arms to aim and operate the Aldis lamp. He waited until we were lifted high on the top of a wave and blinked his "Affirmative." Then the searchlight on the destroyer broke into such a rapid blinking that the skipper couldn't read it, and asked for the message again. We kept asking him what they said until he told us to shut up. Finally he said the destroyer had asked if we wanted to be taken off. In one voice we all turned toward the big girl and bellowed a chorus of "Yes, yes, yes." Of course it was silly trying to shout in that gale, but we were all too keyed up to think of that. The skipper blinked his answer again. For a few minutes we watched until the destroyer had closed us enough so we could see the faces of the officers and men on the wing of the bridge; then she changed course and fell off to le'ward.

About that time our man at the wheel started shouting that we were being blown right into the course of the freighters in the convoy. The column nearest us was so widely spaced between ships that we hadn't noticed how we had been gaining on the freighters. Now we were in for it. The worst part of it was that we couldn't make enough leeway to keep clear of the convoy. The skipper said not to worry about that; the freighters could see us and wouldn't run us down. We weren't so sure. As we crossed astern of the first merchant vessel in the column, she towered up above us like a floating city. Having seen nothing but clouds, snow, rain, and the crazy ocean for days, we had lost our sense of size. *Zaida* was all we had to measure by, and when *Zaida* had been everything that stood between us and Davy Jones's Locker she had seemed pretty important. Now she was dwarfed to the size of a museum model, as these huge ships hammered their way through seas and plowed up geysers of foam and spray that fell from bow to midships. When we came close

enough to see men on the le'ward rails of the freighters, they stared and waved—so we stared and waved back. By the time we had moved a half-mile or so beyond the first column, we came charging into the second column. This time we weren't so lucky, because our course seemed to be blowing us smack up against a tanker that kept her decks more under water than out. But the tanker veered off to starboard until our courses were parallel for a time; as she fell astern she cut back to port and continued on course. We all started laughing when we saw that we were making better time than the convoy. Someone suggested we take the convoy in tow and get the supplies to the other side that much faster. The reason for the difference in speed was clear. The convoy was taking the storm pretty much on the port beam, and that made heavy going that must have reduced speed. Then, too, those great hulks sat low in the water and took the seas like solid body blows thrown in a heavyweight bout. *Zaida,* for all her pitching and tossing, rode the seas just like a sea gull. Along would come a monster roller that seemed to rise higher than the mast, while we were down in the trough. Looking aft, we could see nothing but that great wall bearing down on us and threatening to bury us under hundreds of tons of cold and boiling water. The next minute we would be climbing stern first up the side of that mountain, as though we had suddenly started going backwards at a great rate of speed, then the forward motion of the wave would pick us up and drive us ahead of it, surfboard fashion. Sometimes we would be swept forward so fast that it scared you to watch. After a few seconds the wave would sweep in under us until we were perched high on the crest. As the huge roller moved beyond the bowsprit, we would drop back down into the next trough to wait for another big fellow.

All the time that we were whipping diagonally across the wide spread of ships in the convoy, the destroyer kept dodging around the freighters and tankers, having a hard time keeping up with us. Somewhere in that game of hide-and-seek she signaled to the skipper that she couldn't possibly take us aboard. The skipper

told Joe what she had said, and all of a sudden we felt as though the bottom had dropped out from under us. It left a hollow feeling in the pit of my stomach—worse than the feeling I got from the roller-coaster motion of *Zaida* skating up and down the seas. Apparently the skipper felt the same way, because he turned to Joe and said he had a mind to ask them to shoot him a line so he could be hauled aboard the destroyer and tell them just how badly off we were. It sounded like a fantastic thing to say, but he meant it. Joe looked at him for a second without making any answer, then said he thought the skipper's place was aboard *Zaida* with the rest of us. That made the skipper mad, and he began to protest that he didn't mean he was going to abandon us; he wanted to take any chance if only he could make certain we would be rescued. Joe said something about its being impossible to live in seas like that, even on the end of a life line. So the skipper stopped talking about it. He climbed back on the cabin overhead with the Aldis lamp, got Jobbie to support him again, and started blinking. We didn't know what he was saying, and he didn't tell us. But after he had finished he told somebody to get pencil and paper from the companionway chart drawer. He had asked for our position. When the destroyer answered and someone had written the figures down, we were all curious to know what it amounted to. Several of us went below to see it plotted on the chart: roughly, three hundred miles east of Norfolk, Virginia! And making about ten knots southeast, hour after hour. The skipper admitted that this was fully one hundred miles different from his own dead reckoning; but he didn't say whether he had thought we were nearer shore or farther out to sea. At that stage, it didn't make much difference. What was a little matter of a hundred miles, among friends?

There was another message blinking across the rough waters to us—a long one that we couldn't follow entirely because the seas shut out parts of it. The skipper said nothing after it had stopped, but he blinked a short answer. It turned out later that the message must have had something to do with an earlier ques-

tion from the destroyer as to whether we had enough food and water. We kept an eye on the destroyer and saw her move out in a wide arc until she was steaming dead ahead on our course. She seemed to reduce speed for a while, but she was so often hidden from us that we couldn't tell what she was up to. Nothing happened for about twenty minutes. All of a sudden someone in the *Zaida* cockpit shouted that he had seen two drums on the crest of a wave slightly forward of our starboard beam. We watched, and the two drums rose in sight and slid down into another trough, about a hundred feet away. The drums were painted black and were lashed together. Although they were far enough away to be slightly to le'ward, we were already so nearly abeam of them that we couldn't change our course without being capsized. Jobbie was so anxious to get a line on the drums that he offered to bend a sheet around his waist and swim for them. He had the build of a swimmer and was so strong that he might have been able to make it. He was sure he could. But the skipper and Joe insisted that it would be impossible because the yawl was making such rapid headway that the drums were already falling astern. Smitty complained that if only he had known the destroyer was going to drop the drums overboard we could have changed course gradually and could have picked them up. The trouble was that the afternoon had already come so near to an end that visibility was decreasing and the early winter twilight was already darkening the water. What we didn't know at the time was that the destroyer had payed out the drums on a long line; that she apparently couldn't tell whether or not her method of sending us supplies was going to work. I don't know why she didn't change her course until the line crossed our bow. It looked as though she swung back to le'ward of us and recovered the drums after the experiment failed. She half circled us again, trying to think up something else to do; then she blinked a short message and headed back toward the convoy, already out of sight in the haze.

We hated to see her go. There was something depressing about

the way the clouds settled down around us that night. We were still being driven along before the wind and sea at the same sickening rate—and we continued on much the same course under bare poles for the next forty-eight hours after the destroyer disappeared.

18

BACK ON SHORE, in the Control Room at Headquarters of the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier, the plight of *Zaida* was a mystery during six long days. The unexplained radio message reporting "Conditions favorable" had been received on the morning of December 9; the dispatch from the Escort Commander of the North African convoy was received shortly after midnight on the morning of December 15. During every hour of those silent and discouraging days, however, the elaborate and carefully co-ordinated search for *Zaida* was continued without letup. By the end of the first week the total number of men involved in the search and the total number of ships and planes used mounted so rapidly that some officers wondered whether any more pains had been taken in the Pacific, after Eddie Rickenbacker's plane had sent its last message stating that gas was running low.

From the very first dispatch, the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier took a personal interest in the search and often visited the Control Room. To a large degree, he had been responsible for using sailing vessels in the Coastal Pickets. When the observation-craft program had been given a fair breeze by Washington, the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier had sent to all his forces a directive which read in part as follows:

"The Commander Eastern Sea Frontier for some months has been organizing, through the Coast Guard, all available yachts on this coast for rescue and observation work. . . . From recent conferences it is understood that this plan has been thoroughly worked out by the Coast Guard but that it has not been placed

in effect completely. In the opinion of the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier, it is of vital importance to get every yacht available on the Atlantic coast enrolled for this purpose and actively employed. The importance of this cannot be overemphasized. It is requested that a report be made immediately as to the status of this activity and how many boats are now actively engaged in observation at sea and on rescue work."

Now, several months later, the plan had been developed with such persistence and conscientiousness that yachts built for summer cruising were willing and able to continue in line of duty through the most bitter storms and seas of winter. Officers and men had shown their mettle so courageously that they had won the admiration even of those who had first scoffed at the impetuousness of the blue-water boys who volunteered during the bright and warm days of summer. The crew aboard *Zaida* represented the zealous spirit and courage of all who had so eagerly participated in the Coastal Picket Patrol. True, there were only nine of them lost somewhere off the Atlantic coast of the United States—and there would be tens of thousands of American boys lost, on land and sea, before the final victory. It might be necessary to include the names of these nine men with those thousands who would be irrevocably lost to friends, parents, wives, sweethearts. It might—and it might not. So long as the Axis submarines off our coast could be kept on the defensive, the guarding ships and planes were temporarily available for purposes of search and rescue.

Under the circumstances the chances of rescue were not too good. During any average peacetime year, the merchant vessels lost as ordinary casualties of the sea usually total more than one thousand ships; if freighters and tankers were known to break up under the pounding of winter gales, how much more likely it might be that *CGR 3070* had already gone to the bottom—or at least remained afloat only as a battered derelict. In the land of the Axis powers, human life might be held at such a low level

of esteem that any expenditure of effort, time, materials in search of these nine men would be considered sheer stupidity. In the land of these United States, nine men were worth saving, regardless of cost in terms of effort, time, and money.

These were the motives which prompted that intensive search during the six days from December 9 to December 15. Throughout the daylight hours of December 9, Army and Navy planes swept hundreds of miles of ocean water, frequently passing high over three surface vessels also searching designated sectors. Throughout that night the searchlights of these three ships frequently raked turbulent waters regardless of submarine dangers, increased by such telltale evidence. On December 10 the three ships were assigned new search areas, and again their efforts were augmented by Army and Navy planes. (Subsequent plots showed that *Zaida* had been blown south and east at speeds incredibly faster than anyone had calculated or guessed; that consequently the surface and air craft had scoured areas north and west of her actual position.) Six Navy planes which conducted a carefully co-ordinated search from 0800 to 1400 on December 11 returned to their base in Rhode Island that afternoon to report visibility less than eight miles. The following day, weather was so bad that only surface vessels were able to continue the hunt.

Late on the night of December 12 one Naval Air Station received the following order from the Control Room of the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier:

"Conduct search for missing *CGR 3070* during daylight hours, December 13, as follows: one Army Bomber take departure from Nantucket Island and proceed to 41 North, 68 West and search area between Latitude 40/41 North and Longitude 68/69 West; one PBY take departure from Nantucket Island and proceed to 40 North, 68 West, ending search at 41 North, 67 West, then proceed northeasterly to Longitude 66 West, thence direct

to base. Other planes will conduct search as practicable in area north of Nantucket Light Vessel."

On December 14, the day *after Zaida* had her rendezvous with the North African convoy, but many hours *before* the Escort Commander was able to report the incident, a discouraging piece of information reached the Control Room at Headquarters. A neutral vessel, traveling alone through waters about three hundred miles north of Bermuda, reported that she had sighted and passed what appeared to be a derelict two-masted schooner; that the neutral vessel was unable to approach close aboard for further examination because of unusually heavy seas. Those who read the dispatch feared that *CGR 3070* had been found. The informant was given a full description of *Zaida* and was asked whether the derelict seemed to be painted gray, with high mainmast, small mizzen, and deckhouse aft. No answer. If not *Zaida,* then what "schooner" could possibly be accounted for in that area? The answer came from the Commandant of the First Naval District in Boston. He reported that a Coastal Picket schooner had been driven ashore at Truro, Massachusetts, on December 2, by the same unexpected storm which had disabled *Zaida;* that the crew had been taken off, then the storm had swept the abandoned schooner out to sea. By this time she might well be a derelict, three hundred miles north of Bermuda. Later inspection corroborated this guess.

After the first lifting of hopes, plotting officers began to do a little figuring. If the derelict schooner could have been blown three hundred miles southeast from December 2 to December 14, then it was entirely possible that *Zaida* might now be somewhere in the same general area, having been affected by similar conditions of wind and storm during the same period. The only hitch with such reasoning was that the plotting officers had agreed *Zaida* must have made some progress under sail during a large part of her haphazard cruise. Furthermore, her radio

message on December 9 had come in so strong at Block Island that there had been excellent reason to believe that *Zaida* had then been working back to her base, and that conditions were therefore "satisfactory." On the other hand, the exhaustive search for her in the waters south of Block Island would justify a radical shift of ships and planes from that area to the area where the derelict schooner had been sighted.

Following this line of reasoning, the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier requested the United States Naval Operating Base at Bermuda to conduct air searches in the area of the derelict schooner, in the hope of sighting *CGR 3070*.

Into the midst of all this guesswork and circumstantial reasoning came the necessarily delayed report from the Escort Commander. At about 0100 on the morning of December 15 the Controller at Headquarters read these important words:

"*CGR 3070,* Latitude 37–40, Longitude 69–50 at 1800, December 13. Seaworthy but in need of assistance not rendered due weather, darkness, and necessity other employment of escorts."

Seaworthy! The news seemed almost too good to be true! All the officers who had been betting on George Ratsey's yawl to stand up under any amount of punishment were now able to shake fingers under the skeptical noses of their critical Annapolis friends and say:

"I told you so."

"Fine. But what the hell is she doing way down there? You said she would be 'home' under her own sail. What's 'home' about that stretch of wilderness?"

"Well, if Bermuda weren't such a little speck on the chart, hard enough to find under ideal sailing weather, I'd say she was back in racing form and headed for the bar in the Princess Hotel at Hamilton Harbour."

While some bantered, others were back at the well-thumbed *Zaida* chart, plotting her latest known position. Which direction had she been romping, under sails or under bare poles, since then? If the storm could make stragglers out of nine merchant

vessels in the convoy, what might it have done to *Zaida* during the next day or two? The best choice was to take the known position as a center of a large circle, divide the circle up into segments, and sweep the segments. The plot was made, and long before daylight that morning the requests had been sent to Bermuda, to Army and Navy fields in Virginia and North Carolina. To support them, a fast destroyer in the area was diverted to conduct a surface search. This is the way the plan worked on December 15: three PBYs were assigned one sector; three PBYs were assigned a second sector; three PBYs were assigned a third; three B-17s were assigned the fourth. They took off, covered their assignments until they were low on fuel, returned to their various bases, and made their reports: "Conducted search today with negative results." Late that afternoon the destroyer made her report while still proceeding with the search: "Results negative."

On December 16 the same number of planes swept a new area, with no better luck. Later reports indicated that some of them had missed *CGR 3070* by not more than twenty-five miles.

19

BACK AT the Greenport Coastal Picket Patrol Base, Lieutenant Smith had been trying to find out something about the details of the search for *Zaida*. There was little enough that he could learn, because there was little to report except vain endeavors. Added to his own personal concern were the worried phone calls which had been coming in from the parents of the boys aboard *Zaida*. Mothers, accustomed to seeing their sons back on twenty-four-hour leaves, began to ask if anything had happened. Lieutenant Smith found those questions hard to answer. No matter what he said, there was nothing which could satisfy the troubled questioners.

Lieutenant Smith had other troubles which kept him in a bad state of anxiety. Several of the Pickets which had been able to ride out the early December blow had come back to base in need of so many repairs that there was difficulty in keeping the required number of seaworthy ships on station. He had known from his own sailing experience that several of his smaller boats were not equipped to stand such weather and such extreme cold. Some of them had no stoves at all; many of them had no dog-house on deck so that the watch could duck in out of the sharp winds for a little protection now and then. Men began to be laid up in sick bay with frostbitten hands, ears, feet. Sickness was cutting into his forces until he was shorthanded.

In the midst of all these worries Lieutenant Smith got the cruelest piece of information. The Coast Guard had decided that enough leniency had been shown the Temporary Reserves in this matter of permitting men to enlist on terms similar to those offered by the Continental Army in 1776. The Coast Guard had

sent letters stating that on or before December 15 all officers and men who had entered the Coast Guard as Temporary Reserves would be reclassified. They would be given their choice of resigning or of accepting ratings and commissions in the Regular Reserve. This meant that they would be subject to the same rigid physical standards held up by Navy and Coast Guard alike: if they could pass the physical examination they could become Regular Reserves; if they could not, they would be barred from further service in the Coast Guard.

This seemed to Smith a kind of hitting below the belt. Almost every one of his men had some kind of physical defect which had kept him from enlisting. There had been such elation on the part of so many when they found that the bars had been let down for those who entered the Temporary Reserve. Now the bars were going up. And that meant that many who were so keenly enthusiastic about serving their country under the most trying conditions would be forced to take off their uniforms and go back into civilian life as physical discards.

In accordance with the directive, Lieutenant Smith had gone in to New York early in December to take his physical examination. It was possible that he might get a waiver for his bad eyesight. The doctor said nothing; just completed the routine examination and moved on to the next man. Smith came back to Greenport and waited.

On the morning of December 14 he saw in his mail a letter that looked ominous before he opened it. Inside was a mimeographed form, announcing that he, Lieutenant Rufus Smith, had failed in his examination as a candidate for admission to the Regular Reserve.

So he was out? And if he was out, in spite of the necessary work he had been doing, who took his place? In that same morning mail there must have been a batch of letters for the various enlisted men who had taken their examinations. Did that mean that the base folded up on the next day; that the men now slipping around on ice-covered decks and keeping station in spite

of heavy weather would come back to port with the pride of having done their assignments—and then would be told that they were to take off their uniforms and go home? No, it didn't make sense. There must be some way to keep things together. He phoned New York and couldn't seem to get any answer to the questions tumbling around in his head. The more he thought about it the more he felt his blood boiling. By noon he couldn't keep his feelings pent up any longer. He went down to the game room in the Booth House, sent out word that he wanted everyone rounded up; he was going to talk to them. The men started filing in and stood, waiting. When the room was full Smith climbed up on a box and started to talk. His voice trembled with controlled tension. Nobody took down his little talk, but nobody will forget it. He said something like this:

"Men, you all know that the Temporary Reserve ends tomorrow. You all know what the requirements are. Some of you have already taken your examinations, and I know that a lot of you are going to get little slips of paper like this one I've got in my hand. It happens to be addressed to me, and it happens to say that I am disqualified from further service in the Coast Guard Reserve because of bad eyes. Well, I don't believe it!

"Just as sure as I am standing here, I can tell you men that you are not going to be kicked out of uniform just because you have a bad knee, a bad back, hernia, bad eyesight. You didn't come into this outfit because you expected it would be a picnic, and by God it hasn't been a picnic! You've proved to everyone that you could go out on small craft in all kinds of weather, keep station, fulfill your assignments, and handle your ships like the old-timers that you are. They say we aren't any good; they say we aren't fit for service. But there is the record of what we have been able to do, in hours served at sea.

"And there is the record of what happened to our Coastal Pickets when our ships were out there early in December, and we were all hit by something that was a cross between a hur-

ricane and a blizzard. Many of you men were out there, and you rode that storm out. Some of you got blown a helluva distance off station, and many of you were hurt. But you brought your ships in, and the Coast Guard was proud enough to give you a letter of praise. The Coast Guard isn't going to forget the ability you showed, and the Coast Guard isn't going to kick you out."

He stopped, and everyone thought he was done. But nobody moved, nobody said anything. He looked down at the slip of paper in his hand, and then he started talking again. His voice wasn't being controlled now; it was heavy with accumulated pain.

"There's just one other thing I want to say. *Zaida* didn't come back from the storm. She got blown off her station, and she hasn't been heard from for eleven days. She started out with a bunch of cripples aboard her, fellows just like you. And from last reports, she has some men who are injured. *Zaida* has been in plenty of trouble, and all of you who were out there know just how bad it was. But I want to make a little bet with anyone who will take me up. I'll bet a hundred dollars to one that *Zaida* shows up in some harbor, somewhere, within the next ten days. Does anyone want the bet?"

He was almost crying. He stopped and got down off the box. All at once the men let out a hoarse volley of cheers that grew louder and louder until they shook the Booth House to its foundations.

20

IT WOULD BE HARD to make you understand the way we felt aboard *Zaida* that night after we saw the destroyer show her fantail to us and start plowing back into the dusk after her convoy. She had her job to do, all right, and we knew that. If only the weather had been different, we wouldn't have minded. But in that terrible gale it seemed as though something snapped in us. Hope is a funny thing. Up until that time it seemed as though all of us had given each other support with our hope; as though we were sustained by the sum total of hope in each one of us. And even when we had our own private doubts about ever coming out of that first storm alive, we seemed to turn to each other and find that we got over being afraid because the other fellows were all doing so well to hide their own fears. Each of us, supported by the courage of the others, felt ashamed of personal fears and tried to keep them out of sight. But that night, when we knew that the destroyer wouldn't come back, nobody seemed able to hide his discouragement.

The only consolation was that, after having come so close to being rescued three times—by the Army bomber on the afternoon of the day we capsized, by the limey destroyer, by our own destroyer—we stopped thinking about the possibility of being rescued. At first it seemed pretty grim. But the more we thought about it and talked to each other about it, the more we decided things could be much worse. We knew that some lifeboats in the Atlantic had drifted for weeks through all kinds of cold and hunger before the survivors were picked up. By comparison, we were damn well off. Our food was running low, but there was still enough if we were careful. Our water was brackish, and the

tanks weren't very large, but we knew we could collect rain water. And best of all, there was *Zaida.* She was battered just as we were. She had lost her mizzen and a lot of canvas, she had pieces of tin cans nailed over her vents, she couldn't count on her auxiliary engine—but by God she still kept sailing even without any canvas. The storms couldn't keep up forever. As soon as we hit the Gulf Stream we knew we could rig sail and start working back toward shore. So we decided to stop thinking about what somebody else might do for us and see what we could do for ourselves.

That was the turning point in our winter cruise. Before that second gale blew itself out we began taking stock. First of all, we made a list of the food. Aside from the canned stuff there were still several pounds of potatoes. Then there were boxes of rice that had accumulated because nobody cared much about it. The bread was gone, and there wasn't much we could do with what little flour we had because we had no oven. If we were going on rations, we decided we should appoint someone to be chief storekeeper. His job would be to issue just the amount we all decided on ahead of time, and no fooling. Well, poor Watson was elected. Ever since Ward Weimar had strapped up his broken ribs and we had lashed him in his bunk, he just lay there and seemed too miserable to get up for more than a few minutes at a time. It hurt him too much to move. We could tell from the way his face twisted when the lurches of the ship threw him about in his sack that he was suffering a lot. But after he chewed up our entire supply of aspirin, he just had to make the best of pain. Lying there all the time, he didn't seem to sleep much. And when he did doze off, the least rattling in the cabin would wake him. We decided he would make a good watchdog for our food. So we put all the cans that were left in a locker right at the head of his bunk.

Then we sat down to figure how much time it might take us to sail back to land. We studied the chart in terms of the position given us by the destroyer, figured our course and speed since

then by dead reckoning, estimated the distance we were from shore, and tried to determine how long it might take us to get in. We weren't very happy over our conclusions. There was some difference of opinion, but we decided to take the most gloomy estimates: ten days to two weeks. That was on December 14. As to who should be cook, with a free hand to do whatever he could in the galley, George was elected. We had beefed enough about the skipper's cooking to discourage him from volunteering for the job any longer. Anyway, the guy who drew that assignment wasn't likely to be very popular with anyone when it came to dishing out chow by the tablespoonful. George just shrugged his shoulders and accepted the job without saying anything.

The worst part of it was that when we divided our stock of food by fourteen days we found the best we could make out of it was one meal a day, around noon. The first time we tried it that way we got a shock. George opened up a can of beans and mixed it with some kind of soup and anything else he happened to think of. It made quite a stew, but there wasn't much chance to do more than just warm it up over the potbellied stove. When George shouted, "Chow down," we all gathered around the galley entrance to see what we were going to draw. George gave each of us a mug—the large ones of heavy white crockery with no handle—and ladled the stuff out with a tin cup. Someone started the usual beefing:

"Georgie, what the hell do you call this!"

"Goulash!"

And goulash it was, for every meal, day after day.

After a while our stomachs seemed to shrink so much that we really didn't mind it. The cups were good-sized, and we seemed to get quite a bit of nourishment out of those concoctions. But during the first few days all we could talk about was food. We would tell each other where we were going to blow ourselves to meals when we got back to New York. We named every steak house from the Battery to Fifty-ninth Street—and Joe Choate tossed in a couple of hash joints in Brooklyn. We'd get to argu-

Courtesy Morris Rosenfeld

In peacetime

U. S. Navy Official Photo

After the epic cruise

ZAIDA'S CABIN, LOOKING FOR'ARD

ing over whether it was better to have steaks cut medium or thick, whether they were better with the fat browned to a crisp or trimmed down, whether they were better medium rare or dripping with blood and beef juice. Just for variety, we kept making out menus for Georgie and telling him what we wanted him to whip up for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Then after all the chatter we would settle down to our daily cupful of slop.

While we were taking account of stock we measured the water in the tanks. We had already stopped using it for washing our hands or faces, but that wasn't any hardship because nobody ever seemed to think of doing it anyway. George didn't have any great problem washing dishes because a bucket of salt water over the side was good enough for rinsing the mugs. While the squalls lasted we caught some rain water in canvas and our first experiments were valuable lessons for later on. We found that any good piece of used canvas had so much brine in it that the rain had to wash it off for as much as a half-hour before the collected water tasted fit to drink. The brackish water in the tanks we used for tea and coffee.

As for tobacco, we usually laid in a supply of several cartons, and they lasted for quite a while. As soon as we ran out of them, or almost, there used to be some fancy bargaining for butts. Even that didn't last long, and when the last butt had been smoked down to nothing we tried our hand at rolling our own. There was plenty of tea and coffee, and some of us thought we ought to put such a high priority on toilet paper that it could be used only for making cigarettes. When we ran out of that, we sacrificed to the cause a copy of the *Bluejacket's Manual.*

About December 15 we ran out of the storm, and the skies began to clear. We hoisted our makeshift trys'l and the forestays'l —and almost immediately ran out of a breeze. After all the banging and slatting we had taken from that series of storms, it seemed unbelievable to find ourselves suddenly becalmed in the middle of the Gulf Stream. But the best part of it was that all of us began to catch up on sleep again. Out on deck, the weather

was so warm that we moved around without heavy-weather gear or even pea jackets. The strange color of the water reminded us so much of Florida and Bermuda that there was a lot of talk about going swimming until we found that it wasn't as warm as it looked. All we really cared about was to have enough of a breeze come up to start us on our long jaunt back to shore. And before we had spent more than a few hours idling around out there in the middle of nowhere, a good breeze sprang up. We set our course due west, and day followed day without any more storms.

During those next ten days we all lost track of time pretty much. The only thing that really mattered was food and water. Even underneath our beards, which had begun to get quite handsome by that time, there was plenty of indication that faces were getting thin. Smitty, who must have weighed close to two hundred pounds at the beginning of the cruise, began to get himself stripped down to quite a normal size. Ward Weimar, slight of build, began to get hollow cheeks that weren't helped any by the dark hollows under his eyes. Yet nobody seemed to get sick. The worst that happened to us was that we couldn't throw our weight around with the same carelessness. Whenever there was a call for someone to haul on a halyard or a sheet, it took three or four to do the work that would have been simple for one or two. Ward Weimar began to find that when he took the wheel he couldn't handle it because his wrists got too painful when he put his body behind them. Some of the others found that whenever they heaved on a line their bowels would move without the slightest warning. Smitty seemed to be the only one to develop any kind of skin troubles of serious nature: boils on his arms and legs. The rest of us all had some kinds of rash at times, but nothing that really bothered us.

Considering the number of days we had to put up with each other, we all managed to get along fine. There were times when we would get into little arguments over the best way to do things. The only altercation that seemed to continue day after day was

the feud between Smitty and the skipper; they just rubbed each other the wrong way. Under any other circumstances they wouldn't have had so much chance to be in each other's hair, but with life confined to a single cabin, there was always a chance for trouble. At times it seemed pretty serious, at other times it seemed like a kind of joke. For instance, there was the little incident of the revolvers. One day when the atmosphere had gotten nasty and the skipper had bawled Smitty out for something, the skipper went down to the cabin and started to clean his .38. After all the salt water in the cabin, the revolver certainly needed cleaning. But while he was right in the middle of it Smitty came off watch. When he looked over and saw the skipper sitting on his bunk, Smitty began digging into his duffel bag. Earlier in the fall, when we had been told we couldn't have any more ammunition allowance for target practice, Smitty had offered to bring aboard a .45 automatic of his own, and enough ammunition for limited target practice. That had been approved, and we had all taken turns blasting away at tin cans on the water. So now Smitty hauls out his .45 automatic, sits down on his bunk opposite the skipper, and goes to work cleaning and oiling it. Nothing was said by anyone, but the rest of us who were off watch couldn't help grinning and snickering. It may not have been so funny as we thought. A day or two later the skipper and Smitty had another argument. Shortly after they got over the worst of it Smitty went to Joe Choate, who still spent most of his time in his bunk because of his weakened condition, and handed Joe something done up flat in a cloth. All he said was:

"Hide this. I don't want to know where it is, and I don't want to be able to find it."

Joe knew what it was, from the weight. He hid it.

21

DURING THE THIRD WEEK of the Army-Navy search for *CGR 3070,* many planes took off in all kinds of weather and flew hundreds of miles out over a great fan-shaped area that stretched almost to Bermuda. At Langley Field, not far from Washington, D.C., three huge Flying Fortresses were wheeled from their hangars shortly after daylight on the morning of December 17. In each of them was a specially packed bundle of emergency supplies and rations, attached to a parachute which could be released through the bomb-bay doors if the pilot sighted the missing Coastal Picket boat. All the pilots had been given a detailed description of the yawl, and some of them had already participated in the search. This morning they were to co-ordinate their flight with several Navy PBY planes which would take off from air bases in Virginia and North Carolina.

The day started badly, with heavy fog and rain. At 0800, the scheduled time for take-off, the "ceiling zero" forced a temporary postponement. Reports came in that flying conditions were a little better at two of the Navy bases and that two PBYs had been able to take off. By 1015 two of the Flying Fortresses were given instructions to take off. One after the other, they taxied far down the field, waited until they were given the OK signal from the tower, then gathered speed as they roared powerfully down the runway, lifted their great bodies slowly above the ground, and disappeared into the fog.

These Flying Fortresses were familiar with overwater assignments. For months they had participated in the intensive patrol which had helped bring to an end the submarine depredations in coastal waters of the United States. Several of them had spotted

submarines on the surface of the ocean, hundreds of feet below them, and had dropped their depth bombs with familiar and deadly accuracy. One of the most spectacular kills made by a plane off Hatteras had come one day in July, when an Army pilot had surprised a surfaced submarine almost a hundred miles offshore, had dropped its load, and had circled back to find the submarine sinking, the water spotted with men struggling and swimming in the wake of the depth bombs. The pilot had dropped an inflated life raft near them before he went looking for a ship to rescue the survivors and take them ashore as prisoners.

Submarine hunting had become a specialty of the Army's First Bomber Command during the early months of the war. But this business of trying to locate a sailing vessel in the dead of winter was quite another matter. Given ideal conditions and visibility unlimited, a pilot and his crew in a Flying Fortress might pick up even a fifty-seven-foot boat while it was still merely a black line on the surface twelve miles away. Given bad weather, with intermittent haze, squalls, and fog—the chances of finding anything on the surface of the ocean were very small. Furthermore, there was always the danger that fog might collect as ice on wings, fuselage, and tail until the weight would be too great for even a Fortress to carry. One of the B-17s on this December morning ran into exactly those difficulties and was forced to turn back. She returned to Langley Field after more than four hours in the air to report unfavorable flying conditions out over the ocean: freezing rain and low clouds. Those at the field hoped that the other Fortress would not take undue risks. As the afternoon passed, attempts were made to establish communications with her so that her condition and whereabouts could be determined. Communications reported that all attempts to raise her had failed. The afternoon wore on into evening, evening into night. After her number on the flight board a notation was made: "Overdue."

The pilot of the B-17 was Lieutenant Lecompte. In accordance with instructions, he set his course east, then east by south,

until he had covered more than three hundred miles. Then he began a methodical sweep of the designated area. At times the haze opened up until he could see great stretches of empty ocean beneath him in the cold winter sunlight; then visibility would be reduced until he had to rely on instruments. After a few minutes he would be out in clearer patches of sky, and the eyes of the crew would sweep back and forth across the foam-crested waters far below. Nothing, except the faithful shadow of the great bomber, always lengthening farther and farther eastward as the sun moved down the cold afternoon sky. The prudent limit of endurance would soon be reached, and the search would have to be abandoned in order to get back to shore in time to make a landfall that would bring bomber and crew safe home. The landfall became more imperative when the radioman reported that something had happened to his equipment and he could no longer send or receive.

Then Lieutenant Lecompte saw what he had been looking for. There was the little yawl, only a few miles off to the right, bobbing along through white-capped seas under a small triangular sail forward of the mainmast. There were four men on deck, and as the pilot brought the heavy Fortress around in a slow bank he could see the upturned faces and the waving arms. The pilot told his signalman to use blinker light and tell the yawl that he was dropping a parachute with a package of emergency supplies. While the signalman was sending the message Lieutenant Lecompte brought the Fortress down in great sweeping circles until he leveled off at five hundred feet. Then the bomb-bay doors were opened, the parachute dropped. Looking back, the bomber crew could see the great white chute belly out in the wind and drop about 150 feet ahead of the yawl, almost on her course. Immediately, another sail went up, the yawl changed course slightly, and seemed to come alongside the parachute floating in the water. There was no time to waste hanging around out there any longer. It seemed reasonably sure that the supplies had been hauled aboard with the parachute. As the Fortress set

its course westward for Langley Field, some of the crew could see the men aboard the yawl holding the parachute high above their heads.

The flight back to Langley Field was a difficult one. By the time the B-17 reached land there was no longer even a twilight afterglow in the west. But Lieutenant Lecompte was an old hand at picking his way back to the field through darkness. At 2010 he eased the great Fortress down on the runway, taxied up to the hangar, and climbed down to make his report of another mission successfully completed.

22

FROM THE DECK of *Zaida* we sighted the Flying Fortress long before she seemed to see us. And before we found her in the sky we heard the heavy drone of her motors. Smitty, pessimistic as usual, swore that the bomber would mistake us for a submarine and would blast us right out of the water with a pair of depth bombs. For a minute we thought he might be right, when we saw her open her bomb-bay doors as she circled wide around us. Then she started blinking. The skipper tried to read the message, but every time he would get a few words the Fortress would circle to westward, dead into the line of the sun, and we would all be so blinded that we couldn't tell whether or not she was still using the blinker. All the skipper was sure of was that supplies were being dropped.

It was pretty exciting to see that enormous bird out there. We had figured that we must be still more than three hundred miles from shore, and never expected to see a plane that far away from land. She circled east of us, then leveled out and came in on our course. Just as she passed over us we saw the package starting to fall, then the parachute seemed to catch on something as it pulled out after the package. It only partly opened and fell very fast. When the package hit the water there was quite a splash, and we all let out a shout. The parachute lay on the water about a hundred yards off our starboard bow and far enough to windward so we needed more canvas to beat up that far. The wind was coming from the northwest, and we had trouble in bringing the ship's head up into the wind that close; but after a few minutes we came alongside the parachute and hooked it with the boat hook. It was funny to see the way we all dragged and hauled

on the thing, practically throwing the wet parachute all over each other in our eagerness to get the package. We could see at the end of the chute a great piece of canvas that had been used to wrap the supplies. Finally, we had everything in and lifted up on the rope that held the canvas. It came over the side—empty. We figured that when the package hit the water the force of the water had torn the canvas open; the package had fallen out and had gone to the bottom of the ocean. We turned to look at the Fortress, and held the parachute up to make them see that all we had was a helluva lot of cloth. But the Fortress had already started back toward land, and in a couple of minutes she was out of sight.

23

IN HEADQUARTERS the report from the Flying Fortress was a justification for all the long hours and careful planning that had gone into the protracted search. After the night of December 17, when the Controller was first notified that a B-17 from Langley Field had located the yawl and had dropped supplies to the crew, the grim persistence of a possibly fruitless hunt gave way to a confident and aggressive development of plans. From a study of weather charts, ocean currents, and the assumed course of *CGR 3070*—from the time she had been sighted by the escorting destroyer to the time and place of the rendezvous with the long-range bomber—certain facts became clear. Obviously, the yawl was no derelict; not all of her crew were sick-bay candidates. They were making discreet use of canvas, and they were making good progress on a westerly course toward shore. Now all that was needed was a fair breeze to bring her in safely—a fair breeze and the watchful eyes of pilots equipped with rations of food and water that could be dropped to her plucky crew at regular intervals.

The one disturbing word from the bomber was that only four men had been seen on deck in midafternoon of a fairly good day. What had happened to the other five? It was still possible that some had not survived the ordeal. Others might even now be in serious need of medical attention that could not be supplied by parachute from a plane. The first need was to get word to the searching destroyer. Within twenty minutes after the word of sighting was received, the Controller had rushed a dispatch through Communications and out into the ether:

"Army plane definitely saw *CGR 3070* at 1430 today in 36 North, 69 West. Small sail forward. Course 270 true. Saw men waving on deck. Proceed immediately. Acknowledge."

Within a short time the Communications messenger brought an answer to the Controller. The Captain of the destroyer was well on his way:

"Am proceeding 36 North, 69 West, arriving 0730. Will make first daybreak search on course 160. Request air assistance. Weather appears favorable. Variable cloudiness, winds northwest, force 22–27 knots."

The following morning three more Flying Fortresses took off from Langley Field with instructions to rendezvous with the destroyer; two PBYs from Navy fields took off with related instructions. Late in the afternoon their reports began coming in to Headquarters. The Flying Fortresses had found the going extremely difficult: air very rough and unfavorable, wind thirty knots, rain and haze, poor visibility. The Navy planes all made similar reports. None of the planes had even been able to find the destroyer because of low clouds and haze.

Under these circumstances there seemed to be some doubt as to whether the yawl had been able to continue on her westerly course since the afternoon of the seventeenth. With negative reports from the planes and the high-speed destroyer, perhaps the yawl was not still beating into the wind. Apparently the destroyer, on the scene and well able to judge conditions of wind, seas, and weather, had decided against trying to find the yawl continuing on a westerly course, 270 degrees true, for the Captain had stated, "Will make first daybreak search on course 160." Roughly southeast, as though it were assumed the yawl must be running before the wind again under bare poles. Using these variable factors in their considerations, the plotters and Controllers in Headquarters made their plans for search on the morning of December 19. A dispatch to the Naval Operating Base at Bermuda acknowledged surface and air searches already made from there, then concluded:

". . . Believe vessel endeavoring to reach Atlantic coast but estimate has been carried East probably Southeast last 30 hours. Search today negative. Destroyer in area continuing search tomorrow. Request you conduct air search for vessel tomorrow. Supply pyrotechnic signals if located and endeavor to home destroyer by radio."

Later, the plotters were able to study the extent to which even the yachtsmen had underestimated *Zaida* and her crew. While the search continued throughout the day and night of December 19, *Zaida* was beating into the wind on an unchanging starboard tack that took excellent advantage of the northwesterly winds. Her course was due west, and her speed was good enough to have brought her well over one hundred miles nearer shore than she had been when the Flying Fortress sighted her. Consequently, the plotters' supposition that *Zaida* had been blown before the wind for thirty hours led to the development of search plans that covered areas far to the south and east of their objective. If the reports from the destroyer were entirely responsible for such assumptions, then such discrepancy could be explained. The best naval officer trained in the ways of cruising under power aboard a good-sized man-o'-war would naturally doubt that a fifty-foot yawl could do anything more than run before wind and seas during the good stiff blow that had been piling up seas out of the northwest for several days. Whatever the reasons for the errors in guesswork on the part of the plotters and Controllers, the fact remains that these errors could only be perceived after the returns were all in. At the time, there was little enough information to go on. And with what information they had, those at Headquarters persisted in organizing extensive searches; those at air stations from Halifax through Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina used every available resource to do what they could under difficult winter flying conditions.

On December 21 it was presumed that *Zaida* might be getting

back into coastal shipping lanes; therefore it would be important to notify all ships that might cross her path. Dispatch after dispatch was sent, always with the essential facts and the final instructions:

". . . Request sharp lookout and advise immediately contact."

". . . Request you keep sharp lookout."

". . . May be in vicinity your track between 34 and 36 North. Be alert to sight this craft. Advise if contact is made."

And again to N.O.B. Bermuda on the afternoon of December 21:

"Request aircraft patrolling vicinity Bermuda and vessels and aircraft arriving from or proceeding to Atlantic coast points maintain lookout for yawl until that vessel accounted for."

On December 22 weather conditions were so bad that no planes were able to continue the search. Plans were made for December 23.

24

ALTHOUGH WE were disappointed to lose that fat package the Flying Fortress had dropped, we were too busy with the cares of lookout and seamanship to waste much time over it. The incident just seemed to fit into the breaks of the game—most of them against us—and we had settled down to one single goal: sailing westward until we could make a landfall. The spanking breeze we had when the bomber found us continued throughout the night of December 17 and grew even stronger during December 18 and 19. Earlier, we might have considered that northwesterly blow to be too much for our stick and our sail. But on this leg of the cruise we knew exactly how much we could do with the mainmast, how much punishment the shrouds could take. So we began leaving the trys'l and forestays'l up, day and night.

Smitty got into the spirit of things while the wind blew hard. He kept saying that he had been scared as hell during the first two terrible storms, but that he would never again be afraid of anything so long as he had under him a deck like *Zaida's*. When his turns came for tricks at the wheel he would bounce out of the companionway into the cockpit with more gusto than most of us could show, because we were all getting thinner and weaker as each day passed. One night—either the eighteenth or the nineteenth—he had the mid-to-four watch with me. He took the wheel, and I stood lookout watch. The seas were running pretty heavy on our starboard bow, but Smitty kept bringing the bow up into each one, then let her fall off as *Zaida* steadied on the crest. All through the first of the watch Smitty kept singing "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas," at the top of his lungs. After a

while he kept the same tune but made up a new patter-chorus that he sang to the tumbling seas:

You sons-o'-bitches, I dare ya to roll biggah,
You sons-o'-bitches, I dare ya to roll biggah!

That went on for quite a while, and all the time Smitty was handling the yawl like an old-timer, with each roller a separate problem to be solved nicely if we were to keep our same good headway. I had gone for'ard to tend the le'ward sheets, and while I was taking a look at the phosphorescent foam that boiled around the bow and went streaking off in fading lines of light Smitty stopped shouting his dares. When I got back he was standing up, leaning over the wheel and staring into the blackness off the starboard bow, all the time fighting the wheel to weather and then to lee. I knew he was having a tiresome grind of it and offered to spell him. He said no. Then I said:

"Why d'you stop singing to the sons-of-bitches?"

"Because they kept rolling bigger."

"Shall I take down the trys'l?"

"No, God damn it."

So it went, all through that night and all through the next day. At night we always had trouble with the problem of how to keep a light in the binnacle, so we could see the compass well enough to know we were on course. Some of the men like Windsor and Smitty could feel the wind so fine on their faces that they didn't need the light more than once in a while just to be sure they were on course and the wind hadn't veered. But we had found a way to use our little red flashlights that were attached to our life jackets. They each had a single cell, and we would set the light downward in the binnacle opening at the top so that it threw a little red glow on the line that indicated the ship's head. Then we would spell off one cell with a new one until we had run through them all and had to start with the strongest one again. They lasted us pretty well, together with the cells in the flashlights.

It was one thing to know we were beating along gaily to west-

ward, and it was another thing to know how long it would take us to hit land—or just where we would hit land. We all made guesses. Some of us figured on a landfall around Virginia Beach, others said Hatteras, and the skipper thought we would be nearer Cape Lookout. All we worried about was the possibility of running into shoal water long before we came in sight of land. We didn't like the looks of the chart around Hatteras because of the way Diamond Shoal stuck pretty well out to the southeast for at least twelve miles. But there didn't seem to be much use in worrying about that for several days.

Food began to worry us more than anything else. Food and water. During the next few days after we had sighted the bomber there were several rain squalls that gave us a little water. Some of the ways of getting a drink in the rain were amusing. George used to stand up at the mainmast, put his arms around it, cock his opened mouth sideways with his lips pressed against the mast, and let the water run down his gullet until he had enough. Jobbie found a place where the water drained pretty well off the cabin overhead on the portside aft. We had worried about him a bit, because he seemed to be getting weaker than some of us. One night he got out of his sack to go on watch, stood up in the cabin, and then just crumpled in a heap on the deck. He was out cold. We figured it was because he wasn't getting enough nourishment for that six-foot carcass of his. He stayed pretty much in his bunk for the next few hours but decided to take a hand pumping the bilges with the pump on deck. While he was at it a rain squall hit us, and I heard the skipper shout down the companionway from his position at the wheel:

"Somebody come up and help Jobbie, he's all in."

I got up and found Jobbie flat on the deck, with his open mouth under a trickle of water off the cabin. He was just taking another drink from his favorite bar. When I said I would relieve him, he said:

"There's plenty of water out here. Find a place of your own."

During those days the ritual of the daily meal got to be more

and more unpleasant. Whenever George would start opening cans in the galley there was always a certain kind of suspense until we knew what he would find. Toward the end there weren't any cans that had labels left on them, and we never knew whether we were going to draw beans or sliced peaches. Carlson had a habit of following George into the galley, then of going past him into the fo'castle, where he would sit down on the aft corner of the folding metal bunk. He made out to be having a private little prayer meeting of his own in there with his Bible, but those of us in the cabin could see that his eyes kept peeking out into the galley to watch George fussing with his "goulash." As soon as George would have the kettle of slop ready and would shout, "Chow down," good old Carlson would echo him with a convincing bellow: "Chow down!" Then came the dishing out for everyone except the man on the watch. As each man would get his cupful, his eyes traveled around from cup to cup, just to see if anyone got more than he did. Nobody said anything about it; nobody needed to. Everyone knew what the other fellow was thinking. Some of them would drink it down in gulps in a hurry and then sit around with kind of wistful eyes and watch the rest of us eat it spoonful by spoonful.

On December 21 George said we were going to have ourselves one good square meal of potatoes. We had been saving the potatoes, because Windsor claimed they had a lot of water in them and would be good to keep until last. He said we should eat them raw, but we weren't hungry enough for that. We did fool around with the potato sprouts that had begun to get pretty long. George cut them up and threw them in the stew. But he had in mind one good solid meal of them and wanted to know how we would like them cooked. By that time he had begun to do wonders over the opening in the top of the Shipmate pot-bellied stove. Someone said, "Let's have 'em French-fried." George said it was possible, and he proved it. So we sat down to a cupful of French-fried potatoes apiece—and we ate each piece with much smacking of the lips.

It was after that episode that the skipper took himself out to the chart for a particularly long study. When he finished he went out into the galley, where George was cleaning up, and asked how much stuff we had left. George asked our watchdog Watson, and the answer wasn't very encouraging: five more cans of something; no labels. Then the skipper took George back into the galley and quietly told him he would have to figure out a way to make that much food last for at least a week longer. George said afterwards that nothing on the whole cruise hurt him as much as that, because he was having enough trouble putting up with those hungry expressions on the faces of the crew every time they gathered around his kettle with their empty mugs and watched him dish out the chow. He couldn't possibly make those five cans last seven days. At that time everyone was getting so weak that we had only about four who could handle the wheel on watch. Ward Weimar's wrists had given out so much that he was not able to take the wheel at all. Jobbie was spending most of his time in his sack and could just manage to get around if he didn't exert himself too much. Joe Choate had slowly seemed to get over the serious loss of blood from the gash that was now pretty well healed on his forehead; but after we went on the cup-a-day rations, Joe began to lose strength again. And there was Watson, with his broken ribs. That didn't leave so many of us, when you figure that Carlson hadn't had enough experience to handle the wheel. If things went on a week longer with little or no food there was a good chance that we would be in for a new kind of trouble.

The next day was December 22, and the weather got plenty nasty again. Smitty and I drew the watch from eleven to midnight, and the wind seemed to be swinging around to the north and coming in bunches. At times it would blow up to a snow squall, then moderate until the visibility would be better. When Smitty came up into the cockpit that night he said:

"Well, I'm going to pick up a shore light tonight, you wait and see."

That was getting to be a pretty old gag. Strange how your eyes will pretend to find what you are hoping for. During the daytime it would always be ships away off on the horizon. Your eyes would sweep past something, then cut back and stare hard at a spot where you were sure you had seen something. But there wouldn't be anything except waves dancing, or a cloud low against the water. At night it would seem as though there were lights in every quarter. The same business of sweeping, then a flash out of the tail of your eye. You would jump and turn back to look again. Nothing. After a while we got used to that and would talk about it to the man on watch, just to keep from thinking that we were going nuts.

That night Smitty was the first one to see the light: a buoy flashing red. He said afterwards that he saw it three or four different times before he dared to say anything about it. He had been fooled so many times. But after a while he asked me if I could see it—about two points off the starboard bow. I had been covering the portside, and when I looked where he pointed I couldn't see anything for a second. Then it flashed on. No mistake about it, a flashing red light. We started yelling for the others to come up and take a look; some of them were too sound asleep to hear anything short of Gabriel's trumpet. But the skipper came crawling through the companionway hatch. He got just as excited about it as we did, until it occurred to him that it might be marking a shoal or a sunken wreck. We thought the best thing to do would be to pull up alongside it and see if we could make fast until morning. The wind had moderated quite a bit, but there were still the rollers to make us worry about being smacked against the buoy and having a hole stove through along the waterline. The best we could do was let *Zaida* ride hove to and hope that we could keep paying off within sight of the buoy until daylight. Then we could decide on whether or not the color of the water and the set of the waves indicated shoals.

Just then Smitty shouted, "Look!" and pointed beyond the buoy. In the darkness, not more than a hundred feet away,

we could see the dark outline of a small Patrol boat, completely blacked out. Her course was bringing her past the buoy and astern of us. We shouted at the top of our lungs, and Smitty waved the red binnacle flashlight. But the patrol boat kept on her course until she was almost out of sight. Smitty had put some tracer bullets in the only automatic rifle we had aboard, and he ducked down into the cabin after the rifle. As soon as he could get his bearings again, he aimed over the place where we had last seen the patrol boat and started firing tracer bullets into the air. He fired them at intervals, until he had fired six or eight. Then we began shouting again.

(We found out later that they had seen our flashlight, but had thought we were a submarine; that they deliberately moved on past so they could get set for an attack, with all guns manned and depth charges set for shallow depth explosions. It's a wonder we weren't blown out of the water, for our pains. She proved to be a Coast Guard Patrol boat, one of the "400 boats," gasoline-powered and eighty-three feet long. I guess she was much more scared of us than we were of her. When Smitty started banging away with his tracer bullets, they told us afterwards, one of the crew on the bridge had shouted, "Mr. Skipper, they are firing at us!")

Well, when the Patrol boat turned back we were upwind from her, and she could hear us shouting before she could see us. Then she came in sight again while Smitty kept waving the feeble flashlight, trying to light up the deck and sails. Smitty bellowed that we had been out for three weeks, that we were low on food and water, and could they give us a tow to shore. I think the skipper of the Patrol boat was still suspicious. He shouted back that he was low on gas and couldn't tow us. Then we asked him if he could give us our position. He said we were halfway between Cape Hatteras and Cape Lookout. Just then our makeshift trys'l slipped, and we had to take that down. While we were still working, the Patrol boat asked us how much water we drew. We said eight feet. Then we were told that we were in a danger area

(whatever that meant) and that we shouldn't go north of the buoy; just stay hove to and wait until daylight, when they would lead us in.

While we were still shouting back and forth the wind freshened and snow began to fall. It was quite a little squall, and in no time we had lost sight of the Patrol boat. Under the circumstances we couldn't even be sure of keeping any position in relation to the buoy during the squall. So we jibed around and ran down wind to get out of trouble. The farther we went the worse the wind blew. All that night the wind kept throwing us around in the old-fashioned way we knew too well. After a while we took down all sail and just ran before the storm again.

By 0800 the next morning we figured we were forty miles south and east of the buoy. The snow had changed to rain, but the storm was still thick enough to keep us from working back into the wind. Gradually, the storm moderated, and we were ready for one more try. The skipper had studied the chart, and although he couldn't find on our chart any buoy that seemed to be right for the one we had sighted we decided to beat up toward shore again, north and west. We hoisted the clumsy trys'l and turned *Zaida* back on a starboard reach. About 1030 that morning, December 22, the wind died down. By noon the clouds lifted and started to break so we could see blue sky. Hard as we stared, we couldn't see any sign of shore. But nobody cared. It was enough to know the storm was over.

25

FROM MAY UNTIL AUGUST, 1942, so many freighters and tankers were sunk in the coastal waters off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, that those who knew most about the hot spot referred to it as "Torpedo Junction." Survivors who were able to reach shore near Hatteras in their lifeboats were confronted with little more than a continuous sand bar, thrown up by ocean currents and waves during hundreds of years of alternating seasons. Behind the narrow succession of sandspits and dunes, the shallow waters of Pamlico Sound reach westward for more than sixty miles in back of Cape Hatteras. In earlier days of flesh-and-blood pirates, this desolate, swampy shoestring of grass-covered sand dunes and marshes had afforded excellent hide-outs for desperate men who buried their plunder and never returned to claim it. Several generations later, during the Prohibition era, another breed of pirates made occasional and illegitimate use of these same barren shores.

Yet those who have spent their lives on this lonely stretch of ocean-made land are not inclined to think of it as being so desolate that it cannot sustain life. The little cluster of houses and shacks which makes up the village of Hatteras represents a picturesque and vital culture that can trace its ancestry back to the earliest settlements made by Englishmen in the seventeenth century. A larger village, equally picturesque, squats on higher sand dunes some twelve miles down the series of bars. This larger one, named Ocracoke, seems to have grown up around the lighthouse that rises in the center of the little town and throws a steady white beam fourteen miles out to sea. A narrow and shallow inlet at Ocracoke affords shelter behind the dangerous

lee shore—a shore responsible for so many marine disasters that the Coast Guard has maintained a life-saving station at Ocracoke for many years.

When the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier was assigned the task of coping with the growing menace of submarines, during the winter and spring of 1942, he sent a Coast Guard officer to Ocracoke to supervise the development of a base which might be adequate for a variety of functions. First of all, there was need for some minor operating base from which patrol craft could carry out their missions of search, anti-submarine warfare, and rescue work in the Hatteras area. Soon, a small fleet of Coast Guard "400 boats" began to use the half-mile harbor inside Ocracoke Inlet. One of their duties was to protect shipping that moved from Cape Hatteras to Cape Lookout during hours of daylight and darkness. As sinkings increased, temporary measures were taken to provide a harbor of refuge for merchant vessels within a mine-protected anchorage at Hatteras Cove. Then the "400 boats" were increased in number so that five of them might be organized into a Hatteras Minefield Patrol which would guide ships into the sanctuary at night, escort them on their way during daylight hours, keep shipping out of the danger areas, and be on the alert for the ever-present underseas marauders.

One of the boats in the Minefield Patrol was *CG 462,* an eighty-three-footer, powered with a gasoline engine and armed with machine guns and depth charges. During her months of duty on stations in front of the mine field, she had come to find that this out-of-the-way neck of coastline was not entirely devoid of excitement, even though it was 150 sea miles from Norfolk, the nearest port to the north; seventy sea miles from Morehead City, the nearest port to the south. Thanks to the submarines, there was enough to keep a crew of men from worrying about boredom, isolation, bad drinking water, and vicious greenhead flies. Before *CG 462* had completed many patrols she had begun a series of experiences with the enemy. In the middle of one night in June, *CG 462* had gone to the assistance of a small Patrol boat

but plainly American. Then the flashlight was thrown on what looked like a sail.

Who would be out in a sailboat on a night like this—and why? The skipper hailed the stranger across the rough water and was satisfied with the answer. Next came the business of warning the yawl to keep clear of the Hatteras Minefield. If she kept on her course past the buoy she would not go far before she must be blown sky-high by a charge intended to be lethal to something far less vulnerable than a sailboat. So the warning was shouted through the wind and snow. A few minutes later the strange visitor was lost in a squall.

The next step was to get off a message by radio. That done, the stranger could be watched and guarded until daylight. The message was sent, the Patrol boat began nosing back and forth through the rough seas and falling snow. At daylight she was still searching. The stranger had disappeared.

26

THE SURFACE CONTROLLER, on watch from midnight to 0800 on the morning of December 23, had just gotten himself squared away during the first half-hour. The night was quiet and promised to be pretty dull. There were no reports from planes or ships searching for *CGR 3070,* because the weather had been so bad during the past twenty-four hours that all planes were grounded in the Hatteras area. The destroyer, after days of hard work in rough seas, had been forced to put in at Bermuda for fuel before continuing. This meant a lull in the hunt, and nothing could be expected for several hours. The longer hand of the clock in the middle of the large wall chart poked down past the first half-hour of the watch and started its deliberate climb.

At 0052 one of the lights on the Controller's desk flashed to indicate an incoming phone call. The Controller picked it up. Norfolk calling, something about a Coast Guard Patrol boat out of Ocracoke Inlet. Suddenly the Controller's back straightened up.

"Thirty-seventy?—Where?—How did they know?—Were they sure?"

Then, to his amazement, the details began to fit into place. The Coast Guard boat had been on patrol near Buoy 6 in 34–50 North, 75–40 West, when she had sighted *CGR 3070,* had hailed her, and had found that everything was all right aboard except that she was just about out of water and supplies. The Patrol boat had reported the sighting by means of its radio; the Norfolk Radio Station had just picked it up. What was the weather like down there? Dirty. Very rough seas running, heavy surf on

shore. Patrol boat had lost sight of *CGR 3070* in a snow squall. Still searching. More details as soon as the Norfolk Duty Officer could get them.

Before the Controller had finished, other officers had overheard enough to make them gather round. When he put the phone back in place everyone started asking questions at once. It all added up to one thing: the yawl was somewhere in the vicinity of Buoy 6, the weather was bad, and God only knew what would happen to her between now and daylight.

All right! This is the end, and no more fumbling around! Let's get out every damn thing that will fly or float, and comb that area with all the spit-kits available as soon as it gets light. Let's get out planes and airships enough to make the final hunt foolproof. The little rascal had slipped away from the searchers time after time; *this* time there must be no slip-up. Call the section bases, call the air stations, tell the Army, get everything ready for search, starting at daybreak. All the phones went into service at once. The Section Base at Ocracoke had already started its own plans: a motor lifeboat with a doctor and supplies aboard had left the inlet and was assisting the Patrol boat in her search.

Reports began coming in long before dawn. Everything was ready. There would be two OS2U-3s and one PBY out of the Naval Air Station at Norfolk, two airships out of Elizabeth City, North Carolina, two Civilian Air Patrol planes and one JRF from other fields in the vicinity. Their first reports indicated that conditions were not so good. Visibility poor, with promise of better conditions by afternoon.

Noon passed without any word of success from any of the surface craft or patrol planes. At 1300, still no news, except that the weather was improving; 1400, still nothing.

At 1438 the long-awaited message came: an airship had found the yawl at 34–34 North, 75–15 West. The airship was standing by and was homing planes in the vicinity. The planes were circling back and forth to round up the ships in the area and guide

them to the *3070*. Then a report from a plane to its base was relayed to Headquarters:

"Six men observed on deck, all gesturing wildly for food. Two Coast Guard boats thirteen miles away, proceeding to scene."

The end at last, and no mistake about it this time! Commander Eastern Sea Frontier thought it wasn't quite the end. He came down to the Control Room to supervise final plans. Arrange for a special transport plane, he said, to bring the skipper and crew to New York on December 24. Then make all necessary plans to be certain that each one of the crew would reach home in time to spend Christmas Day with his family.

In the Plotting Room the old arguments began all over again, with new vehemence. The old-tie officers set up their own familiar phrases about the terrible mistake of trying to use such playthings in active wartime service; the ridiculous waste of time, energy, and equipment for three long weeks; and no need for such waste if only the yawl had been kept in where she belonged.

The blue-water yachtsman in the Lieutenant's uniform came on duty too late for the excitement and the arguments. He found a group of officers with dividers, parallel rules, and pencils, holding a post-mortem over the *Zaida* chart. Somebody broke the news to him:

"We found her at last."

"Found *Zaida?*"

"The *3070*."

"Who found her? Where?"

"Right here, where this *X* is: 34–34 North, 75–15 West."

"Well I'll be damned! The last thing I heard, you were looking for her three hundred miles off the coast. Who towed her all the way in?"

"Nobody towed her; she was blown in."

"You're damn right she was 'blown' in—and with enough sail up to make her 'blow' pretty fast!"

"Well, it doesn't matter how she got there; that's where they found her."

"You mean that's where she found us! Don't kid yourself about who found whom. If she could cover hundreds of miles without any help, and no men lost in all those storms, I wouldn't be surprised if she might have made the last forty miles the same way."

Apparently Admiral Andrews thought so too. He wrote out a dispatch and sent it to Ocracoke so that it would be waiting for the skipper and his men when they set foot on shore. The dispatch was brief:

"Commander Eastern Sea Frontier commends the Commanding Officer and crew for their excellent performance of duty and seamanship under unusually difficult circumstances, and extends to them, 'WELL DONE.' "

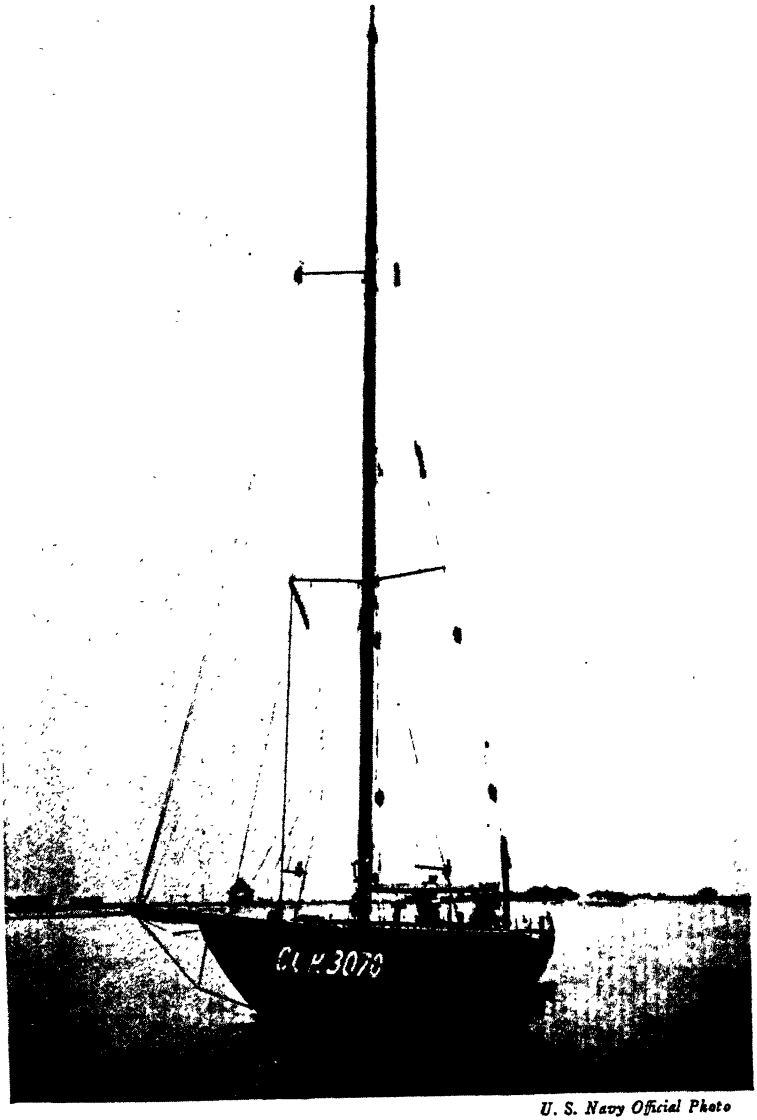
27

ON THE AFTERNOON of December 23 we picked up another buoy and didn't quite know what to do. The one thing we were sure of was that we hadn't found the same buoy that Smitty had sighted the night before. According to our dead reckoning, this new one should have been farther to the south and east. The question was whether we were anywhere near the danger area which the Patrol boat had warned us against. Apparently we were far enough away to permit us to proceed with caution. But about 1400 the wind died almost entirely and was followed by a flat calm that left *Zaida* sitting like a duck on glassy rollers that lifted her gently and eased her down again. It was aggravating to run out of a breeze just when we knew that a few more hours of good sailing would bring us in to land. We knew, too, that the Patrol boat would probably be searching for us now that the storm had cleared and the visibility had improved. If only we could whistle up a breeze we could ease along to a landfall and then see what our chart said about the best cove or inlet to drop anchor. Some of the boys knew about the Hatteras area and didn't like the idea of running *Zaida* up on any beach. The skipper said that unless we swam for shore we would have to beach her, because we had no dinghy, and it had been twenty days since we had watched our yellow life raft go drifting off out of sight. First, we had to find the beach. Windsor protested that there was no sense in talking about beaching *Zaida,* because after the storm we were bound to find a heavy surf running. He told a story about a small boat that was beached that way and everyone aboard had been drowned. That was a cheery thought.

We kept thinking we would sight land at any moment, and all

of us were eager to be the first to spot it. But the afternoon dragged on while we just sat there, going nowhere, with trys'l and forestays'l finding scarcely enough breeze to make them luff.

Then somebody shouted "Blimp! Starboard beam!" She was a lovely sight, lumbering straight toward us through the haze like a slow-motion bullet. We saw her long before we could hear the steady roar of her motors; but from the way she kept her course it seemed she had sighted us first. It is hard to tell you what it meant to us when we suddenly realized that she was out there to watch *Zaida* until surface vessels could be guided to the spot. Up until that time there had been a kind of hidden uneasiness that none of us had been willing to admit. We were hungry and tired and sick of the long cruise; but we hadn't even been willing to tell each other just how sick we were of it. Each man seemed to feel a responsibility for cheering up the other fellow. Now we knew there was no need to hide our feelings, and our first thought was that our troubles were over. Before the blimp had even started to circle us we were hugging each other and shouting and laughing. The tension was broken, and for the first time there were tears in our eyes and an almost hysterical tone of excitement in our voices. All the pent-up doubts and fears were swept away by a flood of chatter about everything and nothing. By the time the blimp swung directly over us we were all on deck except poor Watson, who was still nursing his ribs in his bunk. Smitty and George said the thing they wanted most was a cigarette—and that started everyone working on silly gestures of hands to mouths and arms extended. We found out later that the men in the blimp thought we were a bunch of starved animals "gesticulating wildly for food." The truth is that everyone was too excited to think about that. But the blimp had thought about it before leaving base, because she came back over us, stood still, and began lowering a package on a line. Apparently she was having trouble getting hove to, because she moved aft a bit with the package still dangling below her, then came up alongside and dropped the package into the water on the starboard beam. The line fell right



U. S. Navy Official Photo

CGR 3070 IN OCRACOKE HARBOR

Serene, proud, and dignified in spite of all distress and damage

across the deck and had on it something like a basketball bladder to keep it afloat. We hauled in the line, grabbed the well-wrapped bundle, waved our thanks, and ducked down into the cabin. Under the first wrapping was a sheet of paper with a few words scrawled in pencil:

"Your Position Reported. Sit tight. Help on way—*K-13.*"

We fought our way through layers of paper to a box and found it crammed with all sorts of fancy little packages, including raisins and chocolate bars. Smitty let out a bellow: "No cigarettes," and climbed back on deck to see if he could get them to understand his own particular kind of hunger. The rest of us fell to and polished off the most attractive tidbits in short fashion.

More excited whistles and shouting on deck. We went up and looked where arms were pointing: a plane, and then another, and another. They came in at different altitudes, circled *Zaida,* dipped their wings, and gunned their motors. They made a pretty reception committee, and the roar of their motors was like the rumble of heavy thunder. We stood and gawked at them like bumpkins at a country fair. Then one of them nosed down and dropped another bundle of food that hit the water with a splash. We fished it in, tore it open, and made a deck picnic out of it. Nobody wanted to go below for fear of missing the fun. Within an hour we had counted nine planes and two blimps.

Then the Patrol boats came. The first to show up was a Coast Guard eighty-three-footer that blinked a message saying she had instructions to take us aboard and put a skeleton crew on *Zaida.* While she was creeping up alongside, the boys on *Zaida* who had been itching for a smoke asked for cigarettes—and half-filled packs of them came sailing across to the deck. There was a scramble to save them, everybody laughing and falling all over each other. Then the Patrol boat threw lines, and we warped her alongside. The crew that came aboard to relieve us began looking *Zaida* over as though she were a museum piece. We left her to their curiosity and climbed over to the deck of the Patrol boat. Then we noticed that all the men aboard the Patrol boat

were wearing life jackets. The Commanding Officer said life jackets were required because we had sailed right into the mine field and were in danger of being blown up at any minute. He added that we were safer on deck, but that the Cook had some chow ready for us in the galley. That was all we wanted to know. There was a scramble for the companionway, and in no time at all we were tucking away a good beef stew. The only trouble was that none of us could eat more than a cupful before we began to feel stuffed. For the next few hours, while the Patrol boat headed back toward shore, we ate and slept, ate and slept. But before we were out of sight of *Zaida* we saw that another Patrol boat had her in tow and was easing her gently out of the mine field.

Before dark a heavy fog bank began to roll in from the sea. We didn't pay much attention to it, but it seemed to cause some worry for those who had to handle the navigation. Rather than take a chance of working into the narrow inlet at Ocracoke, the Patrol boat hove to during the night, and it was about 0900 on the morning of December 24 before we reached the Section Base. Word must have got around the town that we were a sight to see, because the dock and the approaches were lined with at least two hundred people. The sight of land and people again was so good that we outstared the crowd while the crew was getting lines ashore and making fast. Then we walked off. We were all proud of Watson, who made no fuss about the business of using his legs more than he had tried before. We knew he still felt mean, but he walked off with the rest of us, and none of us needed any help. They led us up to the mess hall, and a doctor looked us over. There was a lot of praise for our fancy beards. Joe Choate's was the best. Then the doctor set us to work drinking a quart of orange juice apiece. It was wonderful to taste, but most of us couldn't finish our share. Then we were told to get cleaned up, because we were being taken off by plane for New York.

Everyone at Ocracoke was so kind to us that we wouldn't have

minded staying a little longer. But by noon we were taken out to the big amphibian plane that had landed on Pamlico Sound and was waiting for us. Our first stop, they said, would be Elizabeth City, where we would be transferred to a landplane. The nine of us made quite a load, and we were given instructions as to where we would sit so that the weight would be properly distributed for the take-off. Most of the fellows had been in planes before, but some hadn't, and they were a little nervous about it. We strapped ourselves in, held on, and felt the powerful plane lunge forward with increasing speed until we seemed to be slapping through the water much as *Zaida* had felt when the limey destroyer had us in tow. Then we were off the water and free to move about in the plane. Watson seemed too scared to move. He had never been up before. It seemed odd to think that he had taken the long cruise through all those storms with such apparent lack of feeling and that now he was worried. Joe Choate walked past him and shouted in his ear:

"Come on back where you can see something."

Watson just held onto his belt with both hands, shook his head, and said:

"No, thanks. I'd rather stay right here."

28

LIEUTENANT SMITH came in from Greenport to be on hand at Floyd Bennett Field for the return of the wanderers. The news of *Zaida's* appearance off Hatteras had lifted an inordinate accumulation of millstones from his neck. Much as he had wondered and worried about the final outcome, he had stuck to his bet that had found no takers. He had every reason to think that his men would beat back to shore somehow, somewhere. But his convictions had sounded too much like whistling in the dark to anxious mothers, fathers, and wives who had kept the phone ringing in the Booth House, day after day. As soon as he knew he called each one of them to say that all was well. Some could not believe their ears, and had to be told again and again. They wanted all the details at once, but he had nothing to tell them except that the men would be home on or before Christmas Day, with ten-day leaves.

Another millstone gone was Lieutenant Smith's worry about the effect this misfortune might have on the future of the Coastal Picket Base at Greenport. For almost a year he had been working to make his fleet live up to the ideals and standards that had first been formulated for sailing observation craft by Commodore Stanford and himself. There had been endless headaches and problems before the fleet began to operate smoothly and efficiently. If there had been time to get squared away before the fall and winter storms had set in, the record might have looked more impressive. As it was, the cards had seemed stacked against the enterprise in more ways than one.

Then there was the whole mess and confusion of changing

U. S. Navy Official Photo

CREW OF *CGR 3070*

Safe back in New York on Christmas Eve, 1942. Left to right: Arnold Windsor, S1c; James T. Watson, S1c; Vance M. Smith, BM2c; Toivo Koskinen, S1c; Ward Weimar, Cox.; Curtis Arnall, CBM (Skipper); Theodore C. Carlson, S1c; Joseph E. Choate, BM1c; and Edward R. Jobson, S1c.

over his men from Temporary Coast Guard Reserve to regular Coast Guard Reserve. If the sailing fleet survived all other hardships, this new ruling seemed to be the lee shore on which the enterprise would be wrecked. According to the regulations, the skipper and crew on *Zaida* had been carrying on their duties at sea since December 15 without any authorized standing in the Coast Guard; they had sailed as Temporary Reserves, and it had looked as though they would return without the right to wear the uniforms to which they had done credit. Fortunately, however, a system of waivers had been granted to all those men who had demonstrated their ability. Smith had plugged and pounded away on that point until it had been approved by Coast Guard authorities in New York and in Washington. Now he could meet the men from *Zaida* with good news on that score also.

There was still the problem as to whether the *Zaida* crew would come in so weakened that they would have to be unloaded with stretchers. When Smith reached the airport and found a little group of gold braid and wives already assembled as an informal welcoming committee, he had reason to ask about that point. Drawn up all too obviously beside the runway were Navy ambulances, ready for the worst. While Smith was trying to get up his courage to ask, he heard his superior officer, a Coast Guard Captain, slowly warming up to the subject, in his conversation with Mrs. Choate. The Captain explained to her that they all must be ready for the worst, because the ordeal might have left such a mark on the men that they would not be entirely normal, either physically or mentally. For example, they knew now from the doctor at Ocracoke that Joe Choate had suffered a serious wound from a bad blow on the head. The wound was healed, but Joe was pretty weak, and nobody could say what aftereffects might develop. Smith watched Mrs. Choate. She looked attractive and vital enough to impart some of her own strength to one whom she loved deeply. As the Captain talked, her expression showed clearly that she had already anticipated anything he might say on that score. Her answer had confidence

in it; she seemed more solicitous about the troubled Captain than about her husband. She put her hand on his arm and said:

"Don't you worry about that, Captain. They will be all right, I know they will."

Then the Navy transport plane started circling the field. Smith wished he had the same assurance Mrs. Choate had. He knew that his greatest nervousness was one he shared with the Captain. The plane had straightened out for the landing at the far end of the field. It settled with an almost imperceptible bounce, rolled down toward them, and turned. Bearded faces were grinning through the portholes, hands waving. The double doors were thrown open, and Smith watched them pile out. He counted faces scarcely recognizable beneath the shrubbery: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight—nine! So. Then he began to look more closely. Their faces were tanned by salt and wind; their cheekbones stood out too prominently, and the skin seemed drawn too tight. Some of them had changed so much that Smith had to look twice before he was sure. He hung in the background while the others rushed forward with open arms and with feelings that could at last express themselves shamelessly. It made the tears come to Smith's eyes and the hair rise on the back of his neck to watch the expressions on the faces of those youngsters and those not so young. He knew what it must mean to them to see for the first time the familiar faces of those they loved. But the men seemed to be quieter than he had expected. There was no shouting, no laughing. It seemed to him that they were shy and embarrassed by all the handshakes, the arms about them, the kisses. The Captain had his turn, stepped forward, and welcomed them back with the gusto and pride that was genuinely his. And then Smith started the rounds. He didn't want to talk to them then, he just wanted to know one thing. To each he said, as he shook hands:

"How do you feel?"

Each answer was the same:

"Fine."

29

THE COMMANDER Eastern Sea Frontier kept his word: every man was at home on Christmas Day. In the intimacy of their own, they began to talk more freely; to tell the scores of little anecdotes that suddenly seemed ludicrous and absurd. They told of the mess in the cabin when *Zaida* went over; the gear floating around the deck, the water sloshing into all the bunks. They told of how Windsor had been caught in the head with his pants down, of how he was floated off his perch and then dropped with a thud, of how silly he looked trying to climb out over the coaming with his breeches around his ankles. They told of how Carlson got seasick one day before they went on rations, because he had helped himself to a whole can of peanut butter and had eaten it all at once. They described the way George had looked as he stood there in the cabin, soaking wet after his unexpected "bath." To hear them talk, one might have thought they had just returned from a very successful summer vacation.

Then the parents and wives told their own stories of how they had known that something was wrong; of how they had gotten in touch with each other in the hope that someone might know something that would be comforting enough to keep up hope; of how the rumors had begun to fly around. Somebody said the yawl had been wrecked and the few remaining survivors were in a hospital in Halifax. Another rumor had it that they had been picked up by a ship that had taken them to the West Indies and that they wouldn't be released until after the war. Another version hinted that the yawl had been found but that all the crew had been drowned. Some parents said that they were sure a

sudden transfer of duties had made the sending of messages impossible and that the first word would come from England, North Africa, or the Pacific. Others admitted that they had given up hope.

Christmas Day was celebrated around the family tree, with friends visiting and visited, convivial gatherings and appropriate toasts to the men who had proved their mettle, to George Ratsey's wonderful little yawl that had brought them safely through hell and high water.

George Ratsey had been so ill, in the New Rochelle Hospital, that his sons had decided against telling him when *Zaida* was first reported missing. And after the word came to them that she was safe back with her crew at Ocracoke, they had thought it best not to mention the subject at all. Under the circumstances, any shock might have been too much for the old gentleman's feeble and weakened condition. It was odd to see the way he clung tenaciously to life, day after day. One might almost think he had a purpose; that there was a bit of unfinished business to be settled before he was willing to let the inexorable curtain fall. Those interested in the mysterious workings of spiritual influences might read into that willful persistence a kind of intuition about *Zaida's* distress, about the way in which she too was fighting for her life against the powers of sea and wind so familiar to the old yachtsman. How he would have reveled in the way she had ridden those mountainous seas, the way she insisted on sailing, with or without canvas. He had built her to withstand the worst that the sea could throw at her, and this had been her greatest test. If only he could have handled her wheel and used his own knack at trimming sail—— Never mind, the final outcome was the important one. *Zaida* took it all, and *Zaida* came home, proud and dignified in spite of all distress and damage. She had proved herself to be the ship George Ratsey had intended her to be. With that certainty, the old gentleman might willingly and happily let the curtain fall on his fruitful life.

On Christmas Day, George Ratsey died.